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THE

BARDS OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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United Theological Seminary
BS
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1869
13513

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
329 & 331 PEARL STREET
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1869.

PREFACE.

The succeeding work does not profess to be an elaborate or full account of the *mechanical* structure of Hebrew poetry, nor a work of minute and verbal criticism. In order that the book may be tried by its own pretensions, the author deems it necessary to premise that, while containing much literary criticism, and a considerable proportion of biographical and religious matter, and while meant to develop indirectly a subsidiary argument for the truth and divinity of the Bible, its main ambition is to be a Prose Poem, or Hymn, in honor of the Poetry and Poets of the inspired volume, although, as the reader will perceive, he has occasionally diverged into the analysis of Scripture characters, and more rarely into cognate fields of literature or of speculation.

It may, perhaps, be asked why he has not conformed to the common practice of printing his poetical quotations from Scripture, *as poetry*, in their *form* of parallelism. His answer is merely, that he never could bring himself to relish the practice, or to read with pleasure those translations of the Bible where it was used. Even favorite passages, in this guise, seemed new and cold to him. This, of course, was in some

measure, he knew, the effect of associations; but such associations, he knew also, were not confined to him. He may say this the more fearlessly, as translations of the great master-pieces of foreign literature into plain English prose are becoming the order of the day.

He has also to explain, that two, or, at the most, three passages are here repeated from his "Galleries," for the reason, simply, that they at first belonged to a rough draft of the present work, which he began to draw out before his "First Gallery" appeared. They are now restored to their original position

DUNDEE, *November* 14, 1850.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION, ... ix

CHAPTER I

CIRCUMSTANCES CREATING AND MODIFYING OLD TESTAMENT POETRY, ... 23

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW POETRY, . . 42

CHAPTER III.

VARIETIES OF HEBREW POETRY, ... 58

CHAPTER IV.

POETRY OF THE PENTATEUCH, ... 69

CHAPTER V.

POETRY OF THE BOOK OF JOB, ... 76

CHAPTER VI.

POETRY OF THE HISTORICAL BOOKS, ... 96

CHAPTER VII.

POETRY OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS, ... 114

CHAPTER VIII.

PAGE
SOLOMON AND HIS POETRY, ... 130

CHAPTER IX.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETIC BOOKS, ... 145

CHAPTER X.

ISAIAH, ... 150
JEREMIAH, ... 154
EZEKIEL, ... 159
DANIEL, ... 166

CHAPTER XI.

THE MINOR PROPHETS.

JONAH, ... 173
AMOS, ... 181
HOSEA, ... 186
JOEL, ... 189
MICAH, ... 194
NAHUM, ... 199
ZEPHANIAH, ... 200
HABAKKUK, ... 203
OBADIAH, ... 207
HAGGAI, ... 209
ZECHARIAH, ... 211
MALACHI, ... 214

CHAPTER XII.

CIRCUMSTANCES MODIFYING NEW TESTAMENT POETRY, . 217

CHAPTER XIII.

POETRY OF THE GOSPELS, ... 242

CHAPTER XIV.

PAGE
PAUL, ... 247

CHAPTER XV.

PETER AND JAMES, ... 270

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN, ... 280

CHAPTER XVII.

COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE, INFLUENCES, AND EFFECTS OF SCRIPTURE POETRY, ... 296

CONCLUSION.

FUTURE DESTINY OF THE BIBLE, ... 328

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

THE POETICAL CHARACTERS IN SCRIPTURE, ... 352

INTRODUCTION.

That so much of Scripture should be written in the language of poetry, has excited some surprise, and created some inquiry; and yet in nothing do we perceive more clearly than in this, the genuineness, power, and divinity of the oracles of our faith. As the language of poetry is that into which all earnest natures are insensibly betrayed, so it is the only speech which has in it the power of permanent impression. As it gives two ideas in the space of one, so it writes these before the view, as with the luminousness of fire. The language of the imagination is the native language of man. It is the language of his excited intellect—of his aroused passions—of his devotion—of all the higher moods and temperaments of his mind. It was meet, therefore, that it should be the language of his revelation from God. It was meet that, when man was called into the presence of his Maker, he should not be addressed with cold formality, nor in words of lead, nor yet in the harsh thunder of peremptory command and warning, but that he should hear the same figured and glowing speech, to which he was accustomed, flowing in mellower and more majestic accents from the lips of his God.

The language of poetry has, therefore, become the language of the inspired volume. The Bible is a mass of beautiful figures—its words and its thoughts are alike poetical—it has gathered around its central truths all natural beauty and interest—it is a temple, with one altar and one God, but illuminated by a thousand varied lights, and studded with a thousand ornaments. It has substantially but one declaration to make, but it utters it in the voices of the creation. Shining forth from the excellent glory, its light has been reflected on a myriad intervening objects, till it has been at length attempered for our earthly vision. It now beams upon us at once from the heart of man and from the countenance of nature. It has arrayed itself in the charms of fiction. It has gathered new beauty from the works of creation, and new warmth and new power from the very passions of clay. It has pressed into its service the animals of the forest, the flowers of the field, the stars of heaven, all the elements of nature. The lion spurning the sands of the desert, the wild roe leaping over the mountains, the lamb led in silence to the slaughter, the goat speeding to the wilderness, the rose blossoming in Sharon, the lily drooping in the valley, the apple-tree bowing under its fruit, the great rock shadowing a weary land, the river gladdening the dry place, the moon and the morning star, Carmel by the sea, and Tabor among the mountains, the dew from the womb of the morning, the rain upon the mown grass, the rainbow encompassing the landscape, the light God's shadow, the thunder His voice, the wind and the earthquake His footsteps —all such varied objects are made as if naturally designed from their creation to represent Him to whom

the Book and all its emblems point. Thus the quick spirit of the Book has ransacked creation to lay its treasures on Jehovah's altar—united the innumerable rays of a far-streaming glory on the little hill, Calvary —and woven a garland for the bleeding brow of Immanuel, the flowers of which have been culled from the gardens of a universe.

This praise may seem lofty, but it is due to the Bible, and to it alone—because it only, of all poems, has uttered in broken fullness, in finished fragments, that shape of the universal truth which instantly incarnates itself in living nature—fills it as a hand a glove—impregnates it as a thought a word—peoples it as a form a mirror The truth the Bible teaches is not indeed the absolute, abstract, entire truth; but it is (in our judgment, and as it shall yet be more fully understood) the most clear, succinct, consistent, broad, and practical representation of the truth which has ever fallen, or which in this world ever shall fall, upon the fantastic mirror of the human heart, or of nature, and which from both has compelled the most faithful and enduring image. It does not occupy the whole compass of the sky of the infinite from which it proceeds; it does not waylay all future, any more than all past emanations from that region; but it covers, and commands as a whole, that disk of the finite over which it bends. It is, as the amplest, clearest, and highest word ever spoken to man, entitled to command our belief, as well as, through the fire and the natural graces of the utterance, to excite our admiration, and comes over the world and man, not as a suppliant, but as a sovereign—not the timid, but (in the old sense)

the *tyrannous* ruler of our earthly night, "until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts."

Without entering into the vexed and vexatious question of verbal inspiration—without seeking minutely to analyze that abysmal word—inspiration—or to examine the details of a controversy which is little more than begun—we would, as a proper preliminary to our future remarks, thus express more explicitly, though shortly, our general belief as to what the Bible is, and what is its relative position to men and to other works.

The Bible is not then, to commence with negatives, a scientific book; its intention is not to teach geology or astronomy, any more than meteorology or conchology; its allusions to the subjects of science are incidental, brief, glancing for a moment to a passing topic, and then rapidly returning to its main and master theme. Not only so, but its statements seem often to coincide with floating popular notions, as well as to clothe themselves in popular language, while they never fail, through their wonted divine alchymy, to deduce from them lessons of moral truth and wisdom. It is not a full but a fragmentary record even of that part of man's history to which it confines itself. It is not a moral or metaphysical treatise; and, of logical analysis or deduction, it has (save in Paul's Epistles) little or none. The most religious, it is the least theological of books, so far as theology means a conscious, compact, distinctly enounced, and elaborately defended system. An artistic work it can scarcely be called, so slight is the artifice of its language and

rhythmical construction. It is rude in speech, though not in knowledge. What then is the Bible? It is, as a history, the narrative of a multitude of miraculous facts, which skepticism has often challenged, but never disproved, and which, to say the least, must now remain *unsolved phenomena*—the *aerolites* of history—speaking like those from the sky of an unearthly region—the narrative, too, of a life (that of Jesus) at once ideally perfect, and trembling all over with humanity, really spent under this sun, and yet lit along its every step and suffering by a light above it—a life which has since become the measure of all other lives, the standard of human and of absolute perfection—the *ideal at once of man and of God.* As a poem—moral and didactic—it is a repertory of divine instincts—a collection of the deepest intuitions of truth, beauty, justice, holiness—the past, the present, the future—which, by their far vision, the power with which they have stamped themselves on the belief and heart, the hopes and fears, the days and nights of humanity, their superiority to aught else in the thoughts or words of man, their consistency with themselves, their adaptation to general needs, their cheering influence, their progressive development, and their close-drawn connection with those marvelous and unshaken facts—are proved DIVINE in a sense altogether peculiar and alone.

In its relation to man, the Bible therefore stands thus:—It is the authority for the main principle of his belief; it is the manual of the leading rites and practices of his worship; as the manifold echo of the voice of his conscience, it constitutes the grand standard of

his morality; it is his fullest and most authentic missive from his Maker; it is his sole torch into the darkness of the unseen world; all his science, his art, and his philosophy, it aims at, and, at last (in the course of its own development, for it is "a fire unfolding itself"), shall succeed in drawing into harmony with its principles; and of his poetry, it is the loftiest reach. Thus, it is designed at once to command and to charm, to subdue and to sublimate, the mind of man; to command his belief into obedience—to charm his heart and his imagination—to subdue his moral nature—and to sublimate the springs of his hope and joy; predestined, too, to move along with his progress, but to move as did the fiery pillar with the armies of Israel, above and before him—his guide as well as companion, directing his motions, while attending his march. Its power over man has, need we say? been obstinately and long resisted—but resisted in vain. For ages, has this artless, loosely-piled, *little* book been exposed to the fire of the keenest investigation—a fire which meanwhile has consumed contemptuously the mythology of the Iliad, the husbandry of the Georgics, the historical truth of Livy, the fables of the Shaster, the Talmud, and the Koran, the artistic merit of many a popular poem, the authority of many a work of philosophy and science. And yet, *there the Bible lies*, unhurt, untouched, with not one of its pages singed—with not even the smell of fire having passed upon it. Many an attempt has been made to scare away this "Fiery Pillar" of our wanderings, or to prove it a mere natural product of the wilderness; but still, night after night, rises—like one of the sure and ever-shining stars—in the vanguard of the great march of

man, the old column, gliding slow, but guiding certainly to future lands of promise, both in the life that is, and in that which cometh hereafter.

In relation to other books, the Bible occupies a peculiar and solitary position. It is *independent* of all others; it imitates no other book; it copies none; it hardly alludes to any other, whether in praise or blame; and this is nearly as true of its later portions, when books were common, as of its earlier, when books were scarce. It proves thus its originality and power. Mont Blanc does not measure himself with Jura; does not name her, nor speak, save when in thunder he talks to her of God. *Then* only, too, does she

> "Answer from her misty shroud,
> Back to the joyous Alps."

John never speaks of Plato, nor Paul of Demosthenes, nor Jesus of any writer, save Moses and the Prophets. In those great heights, you feel blowing round your temples, and stirring your hair, the free, original, ancient Breath of the upper world, unconventional, unmixed, and irresistible, as the mountain tempest. It is a book *unlike* all others—the points of difference being these, among many more:—First, There is a certain grand unconsciousness, as in Niagara, speaking now in the same tone to the tourists of a world, as when she spoke to the empty wilderness and the silent sun; as in the Himalayan Hills, which cast the same look of still sovereignty over an India unpeopled after the Deluge, as over an India the hive of sweltering nations. Thus burst forth cries of nature—the

voices of the Prophets; and thus do their eyes, from the high places of the world, overlook all the earth You are aware, again, in singular union with this profound unconsciousness and simplicity, of a knowledge and insight equally profound. It is as though a child should pause amid her play, and tell you the secrets of your heart, and the particulars of your after history. The bush beside your path suddenly begins to sigh forth an oracle, in "words unutterable." That unconscious page seems, like the wheel in Ezekiel's vision, to be "full of eyes;" and, open it wherever you may, you start back in surprise or terror, feeling "this book knows all about us; it eyes us meaningly; it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of our hearts." Those herdsmen, vinedressers, shepherds, fishermen, and homeless wanderers, are coeval with all time, and see the end from the beginning. You perceive, again, the presence of a high and holy purpose pervading the Book, which is to trace and promulgate the existence of certain spiritual laws, originally communicated by God, developed in the history of a peculiar people, illustrated by the ruin of nations, proclaimed in a system of national religion and national poetry, and at last sealed, cemented, and spread abroad through the blood and Gospel of One who had always been expected, and who at last arrived—the Christ promised to the Fathers. It is this which renders the Bible in all its parts, religious and holy; casts over its barest portions such an interest as the shadow of the fiery Pillar gave to the sand and shrubs over which it passed—makes what otherwise appear trifles, great as trappings of Godhead—and extracts from fiction and fable, from the crimes of the evil and

the failings of the good, aid to its main object, and illustration of its main principles. You find yourself again in the presence of a "true thing." We hear of the spell of fiction, but a far stronger spell is that of truth; indeed, fiction derives its magic from the quantity of truth it contrives to disguise. In this book, you find truth occasionally, indeed, concealed under the garb of allegory and fable, but frequently in a form as naked and majestic as Adam when he rose from the greensward of Eden. "This is true," we exclaim, "were all else a lie. Here, we have found men, earnest as the stars, speaking to us in language which, by its very heat, impetuosity, unworldliness, fearlessness, almost if not altogether imprudence, severity, and grandeur, proves itself SINCERE, if there be sincerity in earth or in heaven." Once more, the Bible, you feel, answers a question which other books can not. This—the question of questions, the question of all ages—is, in our vernacular and expressive speech, "What shall I do to be *saved?*" "How shall I be peaceful, resigned, holy, and hopeful here, and how happy hereafter, when this cold cloak—the body—has fallen off from the bounding soul within." To this, the "Iliad" of Homer, the Plays of Shakspeare, the "Celeste Mechanique" of La Place, and the Works of Plato, return no proper reply. To this immense query, the Book has given an answer, which may theoretically have been interpreted in various ways, but which, as a practical truth, he who runs may read; which has satisfied the souls of millions; which none ever repented of obeying; and on which many of the wisest, the most learned, the most slow of heart to believe, as well as the ignorant and simple-minded,

have at last been content to lean their living confidence and their dying peace.

The Book, we thus are justified in proclaiming to be *superior* to all other books that have been, or are, or shall ever be on earth. And this, not that it forestalls coming books, or includes all their essential truth within it; nor that, in polish, art, or instant effect, it can be exalted above the written master-pieces of human genius;—what comparison in elaboration, any more than what comparison in girth and greatness, between the cabinet and the oak; but it is, that the Bible, while bearing on its summit the hues of a higher heaven, overtopping with ease all human structures and aspirations—in earth, but not of it—communicating with the omniscience, and recording the acts of the omnipotence, of God—is at the same time the Bible of the poor and lowly, the crutch of the aged, the pillow of the widow, the eye of the blind, the "boy's own book," the solace of the sick, the light of the dying, the grand hope and refuge of simple, sincere, and sorrowing spirits;—it is *this* which at once proclaims its unearthly origin, and so clasps it to the great common heart of humanity, that the extinction of the sun were not more mourned than the extinction of the Bible, or than even its receding from its present pride of place. For, while other books are planets shining with reflected radiance, this book, like the sun, shines with ancient and unborrowed ray. Other books have, to their loftiest altitudes, sprung from earth; this book looks down from heaven high. Other books appeal to understanding or fancy; this book to conscience and to faith. Other books seek our atten

tion; this book demands it—it speaks with authority, and not as the Scribes. Other books glide gracefully along the earth, or onward to the mountain-summits of the ideal; this, and this alone, conducts up the awful abyss which leads to heaven. Other books, after shining their little season, may perish in flames, fiercer than those which destroyed the Alexandrian Library; this must, in essence, remain pure as gold, but unconsumable as asbestos, in the general conflagration. Other books may be forgotten in a universe where suns go down and disappear, like bubbles in the stream; the memory of this book shall shine as the brightness of that eternal firmament, and as those higher stars, which are forever and ever.

It is of the Bible, not as a revelation of *special*, but as a poem embodying *general* truth, that we propose in the following work to speak. Our purpose is not to expound its theological tenets, nor its ritual worship (except so far as these modify the imaginative tendencies and language of the writers), but to exhibit, in some degree, the beauty of the poetic utterance which the writers have given to their views and feelings. To this task we proceed, not merely at the instance of individuals whom we are proud to call friends, but because we feel that it has not been as yet accomplished adequately, or in accommodation to the spirit of the age. Every criticism on a true poem should be itself a poem. We have many excellent, elaborate, and learned criticisms upon the Poetry of the Bible; but the fragmentary essay of Herder alone seems to approach to the idea of a *prose poem* on the subject. A new and fuller effort seems to be demanded. Writers.

too, far more adapted for the work than we, have diverged from it in various directions. Some have laudably devoted themselves to building up anew, and in a more masterly style, the evidences of the authenticity and truth of Scripture; others are employed in rebutting the startling objections to the Bible which have arrived from across the German Ocean. Many are redarguing the whole questions of supernatural inspiration and the Scripture canon from their foundations; some are disposed to treat Bible poetry as something above literary criticism; and others as something beneath it. The majority seem, in search of mistakes, or in search of mysteries, to have forgotten that the Bible is a poem at all.

We propose therefore to take up this neglected theme—the Bards of the Bible; and in seeking to develop their matchless merit as masters of the lyre—to develop, at the same time, indirectly, a subordinate though strong evidence that they are something more—the rightful rulers of the belief and the heart of man. Perhaps this subject may not be found altogether unsuited to the wants of the age. If properly treated, it may induce some to pause before they seek any longer to pull in vain at the roots of a thing so beautiful. It may teach others to prize that Book somewhat more for its literature, which they have all along loved for its truth, its holiness, and its adaptation to their nature. It may strengthen some faltering convictions, and tend to withdraw enthusiasts from the exclusive study of imperfect modern and morbid models to those great ancient masters. It may, possibly, through the lesson of infinite beauty,

successfully insinuate that of eternal truth into some souls hitherto shut against one or both; and as thousands have been led to regard the Bible as a book of genius, from having first thought it a book of God, so in thousands may the process be inverted! It will, in any case, repay, in a certain measure, our debt to that divine volume, which, from early childhood, has hardly ceased for a day to be our companion—which has colored our imagination, commanded our belief, impressed our thought, and steeped our language—which, so familiarized to us by long intimacy, has become rather a friend than a fiery revelation—to the proclamation of which, as containing a Gospel of Peace, we have devoted the most valued of our years—and to the illustration of which, as a word of unequaled genius, we now devote these pages, commending them to the Great Spirit of the Book.

THE BARDS OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

CIRCUMSTANCES CREATING AND MODIFYING OLD TESTAMENT POETRY.

The admitted principle that every poet is partly the creator and partly the creature of circumstances, applies to the Hebrew Bards, as to others. But it is also true that the great poet is *more* the creator than the creature of his age, and of its influences. And this must with peculiar force apply to those for whom we claim a certain supernatural inspiration, connected with their poetic afflatus, in some such mysterious way as the soul is connected, though not identified, with the electric fluid in the nerves and brain. What such writers give must be incomparably more than what they get from their country or their period. Still it is a very important inquiry, what events in Old Testament history, or what influences from peculiar doctrines, from Oriental scenery, or from the structure of the Hebrew language and verse, have tended to awaken or modify their strains, and to bring into play those *occasional causes* which have lent them their mystic and divine power? This is the subject of the present chapter, and we may further premise, that whenever even poetic inspiration is genuine, it never detracts from its merit to record the occasions which gave it birth, the sparks of national or individual feeling from which it exploded, or the influence of other minds in lighting its flame.

and can much less when it is the "authentic fire" of heaven, of which we speak.

The first circumstance we mention, is no less than the creation itself, as it appeared to the Jewish mind. The austere simplicity of that remarkable verse of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," sounds a fitting keynote to the entire volume. Never shall we forget the emotion with which we read those words for the first time in the original tongue. The words themselves, perhaps the earliest ever written—their information so momentous—the scene to which, in their rugged simplicity, they hurried us away, gave them a profound and almost awful interest; and we sat silent and motionless, as under the response of an oracle on which our destiny depended. Longinus has magnified the poetry of the divine exclamation, "Let there be light, and there was light;" but on our feelings the previous statement had a greater effect, throwing us back into the gulf of ages, and giving us a dim retrospect of gigantic cycles rolling forward in silence. The history of the creation indeed is all instinct with poetry. As including an account of the preparations for the reception of man, how beautifully does it evolve. How, like a drama, where the interest deepens toward the conclusion, does it, step by step, awaken and increase our attention and curiosity. First, the formless deep arises—naught seen but undefined and heaving waters, and naught heard but above the surge the broodings of the Eternal Spirit. Then light flashes forth, like some element already existing in all things, though vailed, so instantaneous in its appearance. Then, the firmament arises, dividing the waters from the waters. Then, heaving up from its overhanging seas, the dry land shows its dark earthy substance, to bear the feet of man. Then in the sky, globes, collecting and condensing the scattered light, shine forth to number the years and direct the steps of man. Then the waters, under the genial warmth, begin to teem with life, and the earth to produce its huge offspring, and to send up, as "in dance," its stately and fruit-bearing trees, to feed the appetite and relieve the solitude of man. And then, the preparations

for his coming being complete, he appears. The stage having been swept, and garnished, and lighted up, the great actor steps forward. "And on the sixth day God said, let us make man in our own image." How magnificent these preparations! how fine their gradations! and how deep and mystical the antithesis between the scale on which they had been conducted and the result in which they had issued, in the appearance, amid all that vast and costly theatre, of a child of clay. And how does the contrast swell, instead of narrowing, when we believe, with the geologists, that innumerable centuries had in these preparations been expended! The impulse given to the imagination of the Jews, through their conceptions of the creation, was great, and the allusions of their poets to it afterward are numerous. Solomon, for instance, in his personification of Wisdom, describes it in language lofty as that of Moses. "When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then was I by him, as one brought up with him." Job abounds in reference to this cardinal truth. Isaiah, speaking in the person of God, and throwing down a gantlet to all the heathen deities, says, "I have made the earth, and created man upon it. I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens." Thus does this primal truth or fact of Scripture flash down light and glory over all its pages, and the book may be said to stand in the brightness of its opening verse.

Another event teeming with poetry, and which had no small effect on the Jewish imagination, was the flood. The tradition of a flood is found in all nations, but often in company with ludicrous images and circumstances which mar its sublimity. It is described by Moses with even more than his usual bareness, and almost sterile simplicity. His language scarcely ever rises, save when he speaks of the "windows of heaven being opened," above the level of prose; not another figure in the narrative confesses his emotion at the sight of deluge enwrapping the globe—the yell of millions of drowning and desperate men and animals contending with the surge of the sea—the mountains of earth overtopped by the aspiring waters—the sun retiring from the sight, as if in grief and forever—and, amid all this

assemblage of terrors, the one vessel rising majestic and alone through whose windows look forth Seth's children, their eyes dimmed and darkened with tears. And yet the bare truth of the flood, sown in the hearts of the Hebrews, became a seed of poetry. The flood put a circle of lurid glory round the head of their God; it awed the patriarchs in their midnight tents—it gave a new charm and beauty to the "rainbow which encompasseth the heavens with a glorious circle, and the hands of the Most High have bended it." It brought out all the possible grandeur of the element of water. Frequent are the allusions to it in after days. "The Lord," says David, "sitteth upon the floods," alluding not altogether to the swellings of Jordan, nor to the swellings, seen from Carmel, of the Mediterranean, but to that ocean without a shore, on which his eye saw the Jehovah seated, his wings the winds, his voice the thunder of the sea-billows, his feet feathered with lightnings, and his head lost in the immensity of o'er-canopying gloom. Again, saith Isaiah, in the name of the Almighty, "this is as the waters of Noah unto me, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall go no more over the earth, so have I sworn not to be wroth with thee." And, besides other allusions, we find Peter speaking of God bringing in a "flood upon the world of the ungodly." Thus do the "waters of Noah" send down a far deep voice, which is poetry, into the depths of futurity; and there is no topic, even yet, which, if handled with genius, is so sure to awaken interest and emotion.

Passing over the events connected with the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of the human race—the histories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the romantic story of Joseph and his brethren—the wondrous phenomena attending the departure of Israel from Egypt, we pause at Sinai, the center of the ancient system. There was enacted a scene fitted to produce, in the first instance, an alarm and awe inconsistent with the sublime, but ultimately to create of itself a volcanic stream of national imagination, rising from the roots of the savage hill. Sinai, bare, dark, craggy, in itself, surrounded suddenly by a mantle of gloom, and crowned above all other hills with a dia-

dem of fire—a fierce wind blowing in restless eddies around it —torrents of rain descending through the darkness—the lightnings of God playing upon the summit—thunders crashing incessantly—the trump which shall call the dead to judgment, sending forth a preliminary note, and causing the mountain to thrill and tremble—and heard at intervals, above all, the very voice of the Eternal—the millions of Israel standing silent on the plain, awe and wonder casting a shadow over their faces—and, amid all this, one lonely man going up the hill, and quaking as he goes—the utterance of the fiery law from amid the gloom—the Amen of the tribes—the seclusion of Moses with Jehovah, for forty days, on the top of the mount—the finger of God, the same finger which, dipping itself in glory, had touched the firmament, and left as its trace the sun, writing the ten precepts on the two tables—the passing of the Lord before Moses, as he hasted and threw himself on the ground—the descent of the favored man, with his face shining out the tidings where he had been—all this taken together, while calculated to cast a salutary terror down to remote ages, and to make the children, among the willows of Canaan, to tremble at the name of Sinai, was fitted, too, to produce a peculiar and terrible poetry. We find, accordingly, the shadow of Horeb communicating influence to almost all the Hebrew prophets. It was unquestionably in David's eye, when he sung that highest of his strains, the 18th Psalm, which has carried our common metrical versions of it to unwonted pitches of power:—

> "On cherub and on cherubim
> Full royally he rode,
> And on the wings of mighty winds
> Came flying all abroad."

It was in Daniel's view, when he described the fiery stream going before the Ancient of Days. The prayer of Habakkuk is a description of the same scene. "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise." Paul, even,

when turning his back on the mount that might be touched, seems to linger in admiration of its grandeur, and his description of it is full of poetry. It is hardly too much to say that the genius of the race was kindled at the fires of Sinai.

We mention, as another powerful stimulus to the imagination of the Jews, the peculiar economy of that peculiar people. This, what with the thunders amid which it was cradled—the meteors which, as a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, guided and guarded it—the miracles which, like a supernatural circle, hedged it in—the mysteries of its tabernacle—the unearthly brightness of that Shechinah which filled its holy of holies—the oracular luster shining around its priests—the pomp, the solemnity, and the minuteness of its sacrifices—the wailing cadences, the brisker measures, blended with the awful bursts of its minstrelsy—the temple, with its marble and gold, its pinnacles turned, like the fingers of suppliant hands, to heaven—its molten sea, and bulls of brass—its "carved angels, ever eager-eyed," shapes of celestial sculpture—its mercy-seat, so overshadowed, so inviolable, so darkened, amid its glories, by a penumbra of divine anger—the atmosphere of holiness suffused, like strange sunshine, over every bell and breastplate, candlestick and cherub—the typical character which filled even the solitudes of the place with meaning, and shook them with silent eloquence—the feeling of expectancy and the air of prophecy which reigned over the whole—all this exerted an influence over the imagination as well as the faith, and cast a more than mortal poetry around a system of ceremonies so unique and profound. Hence the merest details, in Leviticus and Exodus, of these rites, become instinct with imagination, and need neither verse nor figure to add to their naked greatness.

Among the doctrines peculiar to the Jews, and inspiring their genius, we may enumerate the unity of the divine nature, their idea of the divine omnipresence, their expectation of a Messiah, their doctrine of a millennium, and their views of a future state. The doctrine of divine unity, by collecting all the scattered rays of beauty and excellence, from every quarter of

the universe, and condensing them into one overpowering conception, by tracing the innumerable rills of thought and feeling to the fountain of an infinite mind, surpasses the most elegant and ethereal polytheism immeasurably more than the sun does the "cinders of the element." However beautiful the mythology of Greece, as interpreted by Wordsworth—however instinct it was with imagination—although it seemed to breathe a supernatural soul into the creation, to rouse and startle it all into life, to fill the throne of the sun with a divine sovereign, to hide a Naiad in every fountain, to crown every rock with an Oread, to deify shadows and storms, and to send sweeping across the waste of ocean a celestial emperor—it must yield without a struggle to the thought of a great One Spirit, feeding by his perpetual presence the lamp of the universe, speaking in all its voices, listening in all its silence, storming in its rage, reposing in its calm, its light the shadow of his greatness, its gloom the hiding-place of his power, its verdure the trace of his steps, its fire the breath of his nostrils, its motion the circulation of his untiring energies, its warmth the effluence of his love, its mountains the altars of his worship, and its oceans the mirrors where he beholds his form, "glassed in tempests." Compared to those conceptions, how does the fine dream of the Pagan Mythus melt away—Olympus, with its multitude of stately celestial natures, dwindle before the solitary immutable throne of Jehovah—the poetry as well as the philosophy of Greece shrink before the single sentence, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord"—and Wordsworth's description of the origin of its multitudinous gods looks tame beside the mighty lines of Milton—

"The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum,
Runs through the arched roof, in words deceiving.
Apollo, from his shrine,
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

He feels from Judah's land,
The dreadful Infant's hand.
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn.
Nor all the gods beside,
Longer dare abide,
Nor Typhon huge, ending in snaky twine.
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can, in his swaddling bands, control the damned crew."

Closely connected with this doctrine of divine unity, is that of divine omnipresence. To the Hebrews, the external universe is just a bright or black screen concealing God. All things are full of, yet all distinct from, him. That cloud on the mountain is his covering; that muttering from the chambers of the thunder is his voice; that sound on the top of the mulberry-trees is his "going;" in that wind, which bends the forest or curls the clouds, he is walking; that sun is his still commanding eye—Whither can they go from his Spirit? whither can they flee from his presence? At every step, and in every circumstance, they feel themselves God-inclosed, God-filled, God-breathing men, with a spiritual presence lowering or smiling on them from the sky, sounding in wild tempest, or creeping in panic stillness across the surface of the earth; and if they turn within, lo! it is there also—an "Eye" hung in the central darkness of their own hearts. Hence the muse of the Hebrew bard is not Dame Memory, nor any of her syren daughters, but the almighty, all-pervading Spirit himself, who is at once the subject, the auditor, and the inspirer of the song.

What heart, in what age or country, has not, at some time or other, throbbed in the expectation of a Messiah, a "Coming One," destined to right the wrongs, stanch the wounds, explain the mystery, and satisfy the ideal, of this wondrous, weary, hapless, and "unintelligible" world—who shall reconcile it to itself, by giving it a purer model of life, and a nobler principle of action—who shall form a living link, wedding it to the high and distant heaven—who shall restore the skies, the roses, and the hearts of Eden, and instruct us, by his plan of reconcilia-

tion, that the fall itself was a stage in the triumph of man? Humanity has not only desired, but has cried aloud for his coming. The finest minds of the Pagan world have expressed a hope, as well as a love of his appearing; it might indeed be proved that this "Desire of all Nations" lies at the foundation of *all* human hope, and is the preserving salt of the world. From earth to heaven, the question was for ages reverberated, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" And for ages, all earnest men wept much because the volume remained shut. But in the minds of the Jews, this feeling dwelt with peculiar intensity and concentration. It rendered every birth a possible epoch; it hung a spell over every cradle. The Desire of all Nations was, in a profound sense, the desire of Jewish females. From the heart, it passed naturally into the imagination, and from thence into the poetry of the land, which is rarely so sublime as when picturing the character and achievements of the Desired and Expected One. This desire, in what singular circumstances was it fulfilled! The earth was at rest and still. The expectation of many ages had come to its height. In the hush of that universal silence, we may imagine the hearts of all nations panting audibly, with strong and intolerable longing. And when the expectation was thus at the fullest, its object arrived. And where did the Desire of all Nations appear? Did he lift up his head in the palaces of Rome, or the porticoes of Athens? No; but he came where the desire was beating most strongly—to the core of the great heart which was panting for him—to the village of Bethlehem, in the midst of Judea, and the neighborhood of Jerusalem. And how came he? Was it in fire and glory, robed in a mantle of tempest, and with embroideries of lightning? No; but as a weeping babe! "To us a *child*" was given. And all who had entered into the genuine spirit of the ancient poetic announcements, felt this to be "very good."

The doctrine of a millennium must surely have been a pure emanation from Heaven. As a mere dream, we could conceive it crossing the brain of a visionary, or quickening the eager pen

of a poet as he wrote it down. But, as a distinct, prominent, and fixed prospect, in the onward view of the philanthropist—as any thing more than a castle in the clouds—it seems to have been let down, like Jacob's ladder, from a higher region. Even granting that it was only a tradition which inspired Virgil's Pollio, it was probably a tradition which had floated from above. To the same region we may trace the allusions to a millennium, which may be found, more or less distinctly, in the many mythologies of the world. But in Scripture alone do we find this doctrine inwrought with the whole system, pervading all its books, and, while thoroughly severed, on the one hand, from absurdity and mysticism, expressed, on the other, in a profusion of figure, and painted in the softest and richest colors. Did the idea of a happy world, whether communicated to the soul of Virgil by current tradition, or caught from the lips of some wandering Jew, or formed by the mere projection of the favorite thought of a golden age upon the canvas of the future, raise him for a time above himself, and inspire one strain matchless among Pagan poets? What a provision, then, must have been made for the production of a world of poetry, from the thick gleams and glimpses of distant glory, scattered over the pages of all the bards of Israel! How sublime the conception, in its own original fountains, reposing under the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations! and especially as we find it flaming around the lips of the prophets of God, who, seeing in the distance the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid; the mountain of the Lord's house exalted above the mountains and established above the hills; the New Jerusalem coming down from God, as a bride adorned for her husband; earth uplifted from the neighborhood of hell to that of heaven; the smoke of its every cottage rising like the smoke of an altar; peace brooding on its oceans; righteousness running in its streams; and the very bells of its horses, bearing "Holiness to the Lord"—leaped up exulting at the sight, and sent forward, from their watch-towers, a far cry of recognition and enthusiasm, "Arise, shine; for thy

light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Who, but writers in the highest sense INSPIRED, could often assume, or long sustain, such strains as these? Who, but they, could keep so steadily separate from the deep clouds of the present a prospect so distinct and sublime? Who, uninfluenced by the Spirit of the Lord, would have dared, not merely as a poetic conception, but as a prophetical announcement, to predict what all history and all experience would seem to stamp with the wildest print of Utopia? "Few, few have striven to make earth heaven," but as few, unenlightened from on high, have ever long grasped or detained the brilliant possibility. It seems, at least, the last refinement of philosophical conjecture. And yet, in the Hebrew prophets, we find it closing every vista, irradiating every gloom, lying, like a bright western heaven, at the termination of every prophetic day; coloring the gorgeous page of Isaiah; gleaming through the willows where Jeremiah had hung his harp; glaring on the wild eye of Ezekiel, who turns from his wheels, "so high that they were dreadful," to show the waters of the sanctuary becoming an immeasurable and universal stream; mingling with the stern denunciations of Micah; tinging with golden edges the dreams of Daniel; and casting transient rays of transcendent beauty amid the obscure and troubled tragedy of the Apocalypse.

With respect to a future state, the conceptions of the heathens were not only imperfect and false, but gross and coarse. In that dreary Tartarus, there were indeed many statuesque forms and noble faces marked out from amid the general haze, and visible in the leaden light. There was poetry in the despairing thirst of Tantalus; poetry in the eternal stone, wet with the eternal sweat of Sisyphus; poetry in the daughters of Danaus filling up

the same everlasting sieve; poetry in that grim figure of Ajax, silent in the shades, and also in that pale form of Dido, gliding from the eye of her lover into the gloom; poetry clustering round the rock of Theseus, and the wheel of Ixion. In their pictures of Elysium, too, there was a soft and melancholy enchantment, most beauteous, yet most rueful to feel. It was "sunlight sheathed." It was heaven, with a shade, not unallied to earth, vailing its brightness. There might be, to quote Wordsworth imitating Virgil,

> "An ampler ether, a diviner air,
> And fields invested with purpureal gleams,
> Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
> Earth owns, is all unworthy to survey."

But surely the radiance had not that spirituality, or solemn beauty, which characterizes our heaven.* The agonies, too, were monotonous attitudes of material woe; they lacked dignity and relief; sculptured with rude power, they were sculptured in rock; their line was too uniform and too black; they lacked those redeeming touches which, like white streaks upon marble, mingle with, and carry off, the uniform intensity of gloom. All wretchedness lay upon them; but it was a silent not an eloquent misery. Despair looked through them; but it was dumb, deaf, and dead. Eternity brooded over the whole; but it was dull and idle, like the calm, sullen face of a marsh or moorland, not the living look of a mountain or of the sea. There is no change, no "lower deep conducting to a yet lower," in a descending series. Intercourse with other worlds there is little or none. The region is insulated in its misery—"beyond the beams of noon, and eve's one star." No stray angel looks down suddenly, like a sunbeam, into its darkness. No grand procession comes from afar, to look and wonder at its miseries. It is a neglected ruin, rather than a prison of pain. Such is the heathen hell, as discovered to us, by Virgil, but especially by Homer.

* We speak here not so much of the Jewish as of the Christian notions of the future state.

How different, and how much more striking, the glimpses in Scripture, penciled, as through chinks in the wall of the mansion of the second death! Its locality is untold, its creation and date are left in obscurity, its names are various—but all rather vails than discoveries of what seems elaborately concealed. It s hell, the hidden or sunken place; it is Gehenna, Tophet; it is a smoke ascending, as if to darken the universe; it is a lake burning with fire and brimstone, but of which the interior is unseen; it is a pit bottomless, a fire unquenchable, a worm undying, a death—the second and the last; it is "without," yet not unvisited or unseen; they shall be tormented in the presence of the Lamb and the holy angels; they shall go forth, and look on the carcasses of them that are slain, whose worm dieth not. This is all, or nearly all we know of it. And yet how unspeakably tremendous! Like the disjointed words upon the wall (in Coleridge's "Dream") taken singly, each word is a riddle—put them together, and what a lesson of lurid terror do they combine to teach! And from such pregnant expressions have come forth, accordingly, all the sublime and dreary dreams of after-poetry, the savage sculpture of Dante, Milton's broad pictures, Pollok's bold sketch, and the whole gallery of gloomy visions which may be found in our great religious prose-authors, from Jeremy Taylor to Thomas Aird.

The next influence we mention, as operating on the Hebrew poets, is the climate and scenery of their country. To be susceptible of such skyey influences is one main distinction between genius and mere talent, and also between the enthusiast and the fanatic. There is a vulgar earnestness which, while addressing a multitude amid the most enchanting scenery, and at the spiritual hour of evening, would feel no elevation, but bellow on as before, susceptible only to the animal sympathy arising from the concourse of human beings, and not at all to the gradual shading in of the sky over that sea of faces, to the voice of the distant streams, and to the upper congregation of the stars, coming out, as if they too would listen to the Gospel of glad tidings. Not thus was Paul unaware of the scene, at Mars Hill, as he

preached Jesus and the resurrection. Not thus indifferent was Edward Irving to the glories of the Frith of Forth, as again and again, in the open air and in full view of them, "rolled the rich thunder of his awful voice," to thousands of silent men. Even the more literal soul of Whitefield caught occasionally in such scenes a glow of enthusiasm, and the coarse current of his thought and diction was tinged with a gleam of poetry. It is vain to say that some men will, nay, ought to be so swallowed up in their subject, as to remember nothing besides. Religion, on the contrary, is a subject which, if properly presented, will challenge, as its own, alike the splendors of earth and heaven, and the voice of the true poet-preacher will appear, as it rises and swells with the theme, worthy of concerting with the eldest harmonies of nature. Those modes, on the other hand, of presenting religious truth, which, amid beautiful scenery and seasons of special spiritual interest, seem harsh, hard, unsuitable, which jar upon the musical sweetness and incense breathing all around, and of which the echo sounds from above like a scream of laughter, contradiction, and scorn, are therein proved to be imperfect, if not false. They are not in unison with the spirit of the surrounding universe, but are rejected and flung back by it as foul or rabid falsehoods.

The Hebrew prophets lived in the eye of nature. We always figure them with cheeks embrowned by the noons of the East. The sun had looked on them, but it was lovingly—the moon had "smitten" them, but it was with poetry, not madness—they had drank in fire, the fire of Eastern day, from a hundred sources—from the lukewarm brooks of their land, from the rich colors of their vegetation, from their mornings of unclouded brightness, from their afternoons of thunder, from the large stars of their evenings and nights. The heat of their climate was strong enough to enkindle but not to enervate their frames, inured as they were to toil, fatigue, fasting, and frequent travel. They dwelt in a land of hills and valleys, of brooks and streams, of spots of exuberant vegetation, of iron-ribbed rocks and mountains—a land, on one side, dipping down in the Mediterranean

Sea, on another, floating up into Lebanon, and on the others, edged by deserts, teeming at once with dreadful scenery and secrets—through which had passed of old time the march of the Almighty, and where his anger had left for its memorials, here, the sandy sepulcher of those thousands whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and there, a whole Dead Sea of vengeance, lowering amid a desolation, fit to be the very gateway of hell —standing between their song and subject-matter, and such a fiery clime, and such stern scenery—the Hebrew bards were enabled to indite a LANGUAGE more deeply dyed in the colors of the sun, more intensely metaphorical, more faithfully transcriptive of nature, a simpler, and yet larger utterance, than ever before or since rushed out from the heart and tongue of man.

And not merely were there thus certain general features connected with the leading events in Old Testament history, with the peculiar doctrines of the Jews, and with the climate and scenery of their country, which secured the existence of poetry, but the very construction and characteristics of the Hebrew tongue were favorable to its birth. Destitute of the richness and infinite flexibility of the Greek, the artificial stateliness and strength of the Latin, and the varied resources and borrowed beauties of modern languages, Adam's tongue—the language of the early giants of the species—was fitted, beyond them all, for the purposes of *lofty* poetry. It was, in the first place, as Herder well calls it, an abyss of *verbs;* and there is no part of speech so well adapted as the verb to express motion, energetic action, quick transition, and strong endurance. This language was no quiet or sullen sea, but all alive, speaking, surging, now bursting in breaker, and now heaving in long deep swell. Its adjectives were borrowed from verbs, served their purposes, and did their work; and, though barren in abstract terms, it was none the less adapted for the purposes of poetry; for it abounded in sensuous terms—it swarmed with words descriptive of the objects of nature. It contains, amid its apparent *inopia verborum*, more than two hundred and fifty

botanical terms; and, then, its utterance, more than that of any other tongue, was a voice from the heart. We sometimes hear orators who appear to speak with the lungs, instead of the lips; but the Hebrews heaved up their rage and their joy, their grief and their terror, from the depths of their hearts. By their frequent use, too, of the present tense, they have unconsciously contributed to the picturesque and powerful effect of their writings. This has quickened their every page, and made their words, if we may so speak, to stand on end.

It may, indeed, be objected to Hebrew poetry, that it has no regular rhythm, except a rude parallelism. What then? Must it be, therefore, altogether destitute of music? Has not the rain a rhythm of its own, as it patters on the pane, or sinks on the bosom of its kindred pool? Hath not the wind a harmony, as it bows the groaning woods, or howls over the mansions of the dead? Have not the waves of ocean their wild base? Has not the thunder its own "deep and dreadful organ-pipe?" Do they speak in rhyme? Do they murmur in blank verse? Who taught them to begin in Iambics, or to close in Alexandrines? And shall not God's own speech have a peculiar note, no more barbarous than is the voice of the old woods or the older cataracts?

Besides, to call parallelism a coarse or uncouth rhythm, betrays an ignorance of its nature. Without entering at large on the subject of Hebrew versification, we may ask any one, who has paid even a slight attention to the subject, if the effect, whether of the gradational parallel, in which the second or responsive clause rises above the first, like the round of a ladder, as in the 1st Psalm—

> "Blessed is the man
> That hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly,
> Nor stood in the way of sinners:
> And hath not sat in the seat of the scornful;"

or the antithetical parallel, in which two lines correspond with each other, by an opposition of terms and sentiments, as in the words—

"The memory of the just is blessed,
But the name of the wicked shall rot;"

or the constructive parallel, in which word does not answer to word, nor sentence, as equivalent or opposite, but there is a correspondence and equality between the different propositions, in the turn and shape of the whole sentence, and of the constructive parts—noun answering to noun, verb to verb, negative to negative, interrogation to interrogation, as in the 19th Psalm—

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;"

or, finally, the introverted parallel, in which, whatever be the number of lines, the first runs parallel with the last, the second with the penultimate, and so throughout, such as—

"My son, if thine heart be wise,
My heart shall rejoice, even mine;
Yea, my reins shall rejoice
When thy lips speak right things—"

We ask, if the effect of all these, perpetually intermingled as they are, be not to enliven the composition, often to give distinctness and precision to the train of thought, to impress the sentiments upon the memory, and to give out a harmony, which, if inferior to rhyme in the compression produced by the difficulty (surmounted) of uniting varied sense with recurring sound, and in the pleasure of surprise; and to blank verse, in freedom, in the effects produced by the variety of pause, and in the force of long and linked passages, as well as of insulated lines, is less slavish than the one, and less arbitrary than the other? Unlike rhyme, its point is more that of thought than of language; unlike blank verse, it never can, however managed, degenerate into heavy prose. Such is parallelism, which generally forms the differential quality of the poetry of Scripture, although there are many passages in it destitute of this aid, and which yet in the spirit they breathe, and the metaphors by which they are garnished, are genuine and high poetry. And there can be little

question, that in the parallelism of the Hebrew tongue we can trace many of the peculiarities of modern writing, and in it find the fountain of the rhythm, the pomp, and antithesis, which lend often such grace, and always such energy, to the style of Johnson, of Junius, of Burke, of Hall, of Chalmers—indeed, of most writers who rise to the grand swells of prose-poetry.

Ere closing this chapter, we may mention one other curious use of parallelism by the Jewish poets. As it is, confessedly, the key to the tower of Hebrew verse, and as, in one species of it, between every two distichs, and every two parts of a sentence, there is an alternation, like the backward and forward movements of a dance, so the sacred writers keep up a similar interchange between the vast concave above and the world below. Mark this in the history of the creation. At first, there is darkness above and darkness below. Then, as the earth is enlightened, the sky is illumined too; the earth is brought forth from the grave of chaos; the heaven is uplifted in its "terrible crystal;" and, ere the earth is inhabited, the air is peopled. Again, as to their present state, the heaven is God's throne, the earth his footstool—grandeur sits on the one, insignificance cowers on the other; power resides above in the meteors, the storms, the stars, the lightnings, the sunbeams—passive weakness shrinks and trembles below. The one is a place, nay, a womb of glory, from which angels glide, and Deity himself at times descends. The other is a tomb, an Aceldama, a Golgotha; and yet, though the one, in *comparison* with the other, be so groveling and mean, taken in *connection* with the other, it catches and reflects a certain degree of glory. It has no light in itself, but the sun condescends to shine upon it, to gild its streams and to touch its mountains, as with the finger of God. It is a footstool, but it is God's footstool. It is a tomb, but a tomb set in the blue of heaven. It has no power in itself, but it witnesses and feels the energies of the upper universe. It is not the habitation of demons, or angels, or God: but angels rest their feet upon its hills, demons walk to and fro through its wastes, and God has been heard sometimes in its groves or gardens, in the

cool wind of the day. Hence, while righteousness looks down from heaven, truth springs from earth. Hence, the prophet, after saying, "Give ear, O ye heavens! and I will speak," adds, "and hear, O earth! the words of my mouth." So much for this mighty prophetical dance or parallelism between earth and heaven.*

* See, on this subject, Herder's "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry."

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW POETRY

At the hazard of retreading here and there our own steps in the Introduction, we must speak separately of the general characteristics of Hebrew poets. To the first we intend to name of these, we have referred already—it is their figurative language. Like the swan on still St. Mary's Lake, each thought "floats double," —each birth is of twins. It is so with all high thoughts, except, perhaps, those of geometrical abstraction. The *proof* of great thoughts is, will they translate into figured and sensuous expression? will nature recognize, own, and clothe them, as if they were her own? or must they stand, small, shivering, and naked, before her unopened door? But here we must make a distinction. Many thoughts find, after beating about for, natural analogies—they strain a tribute. The thought of genius precedes its word, only as the flash of the lightning the roar of the near thunder; nay, they often seem identical. Now, the images of Scripture are peculiarly of this description. The connection between them and their wedded thoughts seems necessary. With this is closely connected the naturalness of Scripture figure. No critical reproach is more common, or more indiscriminate, than that which imputes to writers want of nature. For nature is often a conventional term. What is as natural to one man as to breathe, would be, and seems, to another, the spasm of imbecile agony. Consequently, the ornate writer can not often believe himself ornate, can not help thinking and speaking in figure, and is astonished to hear elaboration imputed to passages which have been literally each the work of an

hour. But all modern styles are more or less artificial. Their fire is in part a false fire. The spirit of those unnaturally excited ages, rendered feverish by luxuries, by stimulants, by uncertainties, by changes, and by raging speculation, has blown sevenfold their native ardor, and rendered its accurate analysis difficult. Whereas, the fire of the Hebrews—a people living on corn, water, or milk—sitting under their vine, but seldom tasting its juice—dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations—surrounded by customs and manners ancient and unchangeable as the mountains,—a fire fed chiefly by the still aspects of their scenery, the force of their piety, the influences of their climate, the forms of their worship, and the memories of their past—was a fire as natural as that of a volcano. The figures used are just the burning coals of that flame, and come forth in brief, impetuous, impatient volleys. There is scarcely any artifice or even art in their use. Hebrew art went no farther than to construct a simple form of versification. The management of figures, in what numbers they should be introduced, from what objects drawn, to what length expanded, how often repeated, and how so set as to *tell* most powerfully, was beyond or beneath it. Enough that the crater of the Hebrew bosom was never empty, that the fire was always there ready to fill every channel presented to it, and to change every object it met into itself.

The figures of the Hebrews were very numerous. Their country, indeed, was limited in extent, and the objects it contained, consequently, rather marked than manifold. But the "mind is its own place," and from that land flowing with milk and honey, what a rich *herbarium*, *aviary*, *menagerie*, have the bards of the Bible collected and consecrated to God! We recall not our former word, that they have ransacked *creation* in the sweep of their genius; for all the bold features and main elements of the world, enhanced, too, by the force of enthusiasm, and shown in a light which is not of the earth, are to be found in them. Their images are never forced out, nor are they sprinkled over the page with a chariness, savoring more of poverty than of taste, but hurry forth, thick and intertangled

like sparks from the furnace. Each figure, too, proceeding as it does, not from the playful mint of fancy, but from the solemn forge of imagination, seems sanctified in its birth, an awful and holy, as well as a lovely thing. The flowers laid on God's altar have indeed been gathered in the gardens and wildernesses of earth, but the dew and the divinity of Heaven are resting on every bud and blade. It seems less a human tribute than a selection from the Godlike rendered back to God.

We name, as a second characteristic of Hebrew poetry, its simplicity. This approaches the degree of artlessness. The Hebrew poets were, indeed, full-grown and stern men, but they united with this quality a certain childlikeness, for which, at least, in all its simplicity, we may search other literatures in vain. We find this in their selection of topics. Subjects exceedingly delicate, and, to fastidious civilization, offensive, are occasionally alluded to with a plainness of speech springing from perfect innocence of intention. The language of Scripture, like the finger of the sun, touches uncleanness, and remains pure. "Who can touch pitch, and not be defiled?" The quiet, holy hand of a Moses or an Ezekiel *can*. The proof is, that none of the descriptions they give us of sin have ever inflamed the most inflammable imagination. Men read the 20th chapter of Leviticus, and the 23d of Ezekiel, precisely as they witness the unwitting actions of a child; nay, they feel their moral sense strengthened and purified by the exposures of vice which such passages contain. The Jewish writers manifest this simplicity, too, in the extreme width and homeliness of their imagery. They draw their images from all that interests man, or that bears the faintest reflection of the face of God. The willow by the water-courses, and the cedar on Lebanon—the ant and the leviathan—the widow's cruse of oil and Sinai's fount of fire—the sower overtaking the reaper, and God coming from Teman and from Paran—Jael's tent-nail, and Elijah's fiery chariot—boys and girls playing in the streets of Jerusalem—and those angels that are spirits, and those ministers that are flames of fire; yea, meaner objects than any of these are selected impartially to

illustrate the great truths which are the subjects of their song. The path of every true poet should be the path of the sun rays, which, secure in their own purity and directness, pass, fearless as the spirit of a child, through all deep, dark, intricate, or unholy places—equally illustrate the crest of a serpent and the wing of a bird—pause on the summit of an ant-hillock, as on the brow of Mont Blanc—take up as a "little thing" alike the crater and the shed cone of the pine—and after they have, in one wide charity embraced all shaped and sentient things, expend their waste strength and beauty upon the inane space beyond. Thus does the imagination of the Hebrew bard count no subject too low, and none too high, for its comprehensive and incontrollable sweep.

Unconsciousness we hold to be the highest style of simplicity and of genius. It has been said, indeed, by a high authority (the late John Sterling), that men of genius are conscious, not of what is peculiar in the individual, but of what is universal in the race; of what characterizes not a man, but Man—not of their own individual genius, but of God, as moving within their minds. Yet, what in reality is this, but the unconsciousness, for which we would contend? When we say that men of genius, in their highest moods, are unconscious, we mean, not that these men become the mere tubes through which a foreign influence descends, but that certain lofty emotions or ideas so fill and possess them, as to produce temporary forgetfulness of themselves, except as the passive though intelligent instruments of the feeling or the thought. It is true, that afterward self may suggest the reflection—"the fact that we have been selected to receive and convey such melodies proves our breadth and fitness; it is from the oak, not the reed, that the wind elicits its deepest music." But, in the first place, this thought never takes place at the same time with the true afflatus, and is almost inconsistent with its presence. It is a mere after-inference; an inference, secondly, which is not always made; nay, thirdly, an inference which is often rejected, when the poet off the stool feels tempted to regard with suspicion or shuddering disgust the results of his

raptured hour of inspiration. Milton seems to have shrunk back at the retrospect of the height he had reached in the "Paradise Lost," and preferred his "Paradise Regained." Shakspeare, on the other hand, having wrought his tragic miracles under a more entire self-abandonment, becomes, in his Sonnets, owing to a reflex act of sagacity, aware of what feats he had done. Bunyan is carried on through all the stages of his immortal Pilgrimage like a child in the leading-strings of his nurse; but, after looking back upon its completed course, begins, with all the harmless vanity of a child (see his prefatory poem to the second part), to *crow* over the achievement. Thus all gifted spirits do best when they "know not what they do." The boy Tell

"Was great, nor knew how great he was."

But, if this be true of men of genius, it is still more characteristic of the Bards of the Bible; for they possess perfect passive reception in the moment of their utterance, and have given no symptoms of that after self-satisfaction which it were hard to call, and harder to distinguish from, literary vanity. The head reels at the thought of Isaiah weighing his "Burdens" over against the odes of Deborah or David; or of Ezekiel measuring his intellectual stature with that of Daniel. Like many evening rivers of different bulks and channels, but descending from one chain of mountains, swollen by one rain, and meeting in one valley, do those mighty prophets lift up their unequal, unemulous, unconscious, but harmonious and heaven-seeking voices.

We notice next the *boldness*, which is not inferior to the beauty of their speech. They use liberties, and dare darings, which make us tremble. One is reminded, while reading their words, of the unhinged intellect of the aged King of England, loosened from all law, delivered from all fear, having cast off every weight of custom, conventionalism, even reason, ranging at large, a fire-winged energy, free of the universe, exposing all the abuses of society, and asking strange and

unbidden questions at the Deity himself. Thus, not in frenzy, but in the height of the privilege of their peculiar power, do the Hebrew Prophets often invert the torrent of their argument and expostulation, curving it up from earth to heaven—from Man to God. Hear the words of Jeremiah—"O the Hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that can not save? Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake. Do not *disgrace the throne of thy glory*." Or hear Job—"I know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net. Behold, I cry out of *wrong*, but I am not heard. I cry aloud but there is *no* judgment. Why do ye persecute me *as God*, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" Or listen to Jonah's irony, thrown up in the very nostrils of Jehovah—"I *knew* that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil; *therefore*, now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me." These expressions, amid many similar, suggest the memory of those sublimest of uninspired words—

> "Ye heavens,
> If ye do love old men, if your sweet sway
> Hallow obedience, if *yourselves are old*,
> Make it your cause, avenge me of my daughters."

Surely, there is in such words no irreverence or blasphemy. Nay, on those moments, when prayer and prophecy transcend themselves, when the divine within, by the agony of its earnestness, is stung up almost to the measure and the stature of the divine above—when the soul rises in its majestic wrath, like "thunder heard remote"—is it not then that men have reached all but their highest point of elevation possible to them on earth, and felt as if they saw

> "God face to face, nor yet were blasted by his brow?"

Very different, however, this spirit, from that of some modern poets, who have

"Rushed in where angels fear to tread;"

and, under the mask of fiction, have taken the opportunity of venting their spleen or personal disgust in the face of God. Without entering on the great enigma of the "Faust," or venturing to deny that Goethe's real purpose was reverence, we question much if the effect of his opening scenes in heaven, be not to produce a very opposite and pernicious feeling. Byron, again, at one time stands in the august presence-chamber, like a sulky, speechless fiend, and, at another, asks small uneasy questions, like an ill-conditioned child. Dante and Milton alone, on this high platform, unite a thorough consciousness of themselves, with a profound reverence for him in whose presence they stand; they bend before, but do not shrivel up in his sight; they come slowly and softly, but do not steal, into his presence. We must not stop to do more than allude to those modern caricaturists of Milton and Byron, who, in the guise of prodigious pietism, display a self-ignorance and self-conceit which are almost blasphemy, and who, as their plumes vain-gloriously bristle up and broaden in the eye of Deity, and as their harsh ambitious scream rises in his ear, present a spectacle which we know not whether to call more ludicrous or more horrible.

But the boldness of the Hebrew bards, which we panegyrize, extends to more than their expressions of religious emotion—it extends to all their sentiment, to their style, and to their bearing. "They know not to give flattering titles; in so doing," they feel "that their Maker would soon take them away." With God vertical over their head in all their motions, miserable courtiers and sycophants they would have made, even if such base avenues to success had been always open before them. They are the stern rebukers of wickedness in high places, the unhired advocates of the oppressed and the poor; and fully do they purchase a title to the charge of being "troublers of Israel,"

disturbing it as the hurricane the elements and haunts of the pestilence. All classes, from the King of Samaria to the drunkard of Ephraim—from the Babylonian Lucifer, son of the morning, to the meanest, mincing, and wanton-eyed daughter of Zion, with her round tire, like the moon—kings, priests, peasantry, goldsmiths, and carpenters—men and women, countrymen and foreigners, must listen and tremble, when they smite with their hand and stamp with their foot. In them the moral conscience of the people found an incarnation, and stood at the corner of every street, to deplore degeneracy, to expose imposture, to blast the pretenses and the minions of despotism, to denounce every kind and degree of sin, and to point, with a finger which never shook, to the unrepealed code of Moses, and to the law written on the fleshly tablets of the heart, as the standards of rectitude. Where, in modern ages, can we find a class exerting or aspiring to such a province and such a power? Individuals of prophetic mood we have had and have. We have had a Milton, "wasting his life" in loud or silent protest against that age of "evil days and evil tongues" on which he had fallen. We have had a Cowper, lifting up "Expostulations," not unheard, to his degraded country. We have had an Edward Irving, his "neck clothed with thunder," and his loins girt with the "spirit and the power of Elias," pealing out harsh truth, till he sank down, wearied and silent, in death. We have had a poor, bewildered Shelly, with eyes open to the disease, shut to the true remedy, sincere, beautiful, and lost, as a lunatic angel, yet with such melody in many of his words, that all men wept to hear them. We have still a Thomas Carlyle, who, from the study, where he might have trained himself for a great artist, has come forth, and, standing by the wayside, has uttered the old laws of justice and of retribution, with such force and earnestness that they seem new and burning "burdens," as if from the mountains of Israel. But we have not, and never have had, a class, *anointed* and *consecrated* by the *hand of God* to the *utterance of eternal truth*, as *immediately taught them from behind and above*—speaking, moving, looking, gesticulating, and

acting, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Our poets have, in general, been beautiful mirrors of the beautiful, elegant and tuneful minstrels that could play well on an instrument, and that were to the world as a "very lovely song,"—what else our Rogerses and Moores?—not men persecuted and chased into action and utterance, by the apparition behind them of the true. Our statesmen, as a class, have been cold temporizers, mistaking craft for wisdom, success for merit, and the putting off the evil day for success. Our mental philosophers have done little else than translate into ingenious jargon the eldest sentiments and intuitive knowledge of humanity—they have taught men to lisp of the Infinite by new methods, and to babble of the Eternal in terms elaborately and artistically feeble. Our preachers, as a body, have been barely faithful to their brief, and they have found that brief in the compass of a confession, rather than in the pages of the Bible, shown and expounded in the light of the great God-stricken soul within. But our prophets, where are they? Where many who resemble those wild, wandering, but holy flames of fire, which once ran along the highways, the hills, and the market-places of Palestine? Instead, what find we? For the most part, an assortment of all varieties of scribbling, scheming, speculating, and preaching machines, the most active of whose movements form the strongest antithesis to true life. Even the prophetic men among us display rather the mood than the insight of prophecy—rather its fire than its light, and rather its fury than its fire—rather a yearning after, than a feeling of the stoop of the descending God. We are compelled to take the complaint of the ancient seer, with a yet bitterer feeling than his—

> "Our signs we do not now behold
> There is not us among
> A prophet more, nor any one
> That knows the time how long."

And we must even return, and sit at the feet of those bards of Israel, who, apart from their supernatural pretensions—as teachers, as poets, as truthful and earnest men—stand as yet alone,

unsurmounted and unapproached—the Himalayan mountains of mankind.

Speaking out fearless sentiments, their language is "loud and bold." It abounds in personifications, interrogations, apostrophes, hyperboles, sudden and violent transitions, figures begun to be broken off, fierce, insulated, and ragged exclamations, all those outlets of strong emotion which rhetoric has since been occupied in measuring and squaring. It is a compound of the language of poetry, oratory, and prayer. Its vehemence, ardor, simplicity, picturesque and poetic character, as well as its divine worth, have carried it safe through every ordeal of translation; it has mixed with the stream of every language uninjured, nay, has finely colored the literary style of Europe. The charm which Scripture quotation adds to writing, let those tell who have read Milton, Bunyan, Burke, Foster, Southey, Croly, Carlyle, Macaulay, yea, and even Byron, all of whom have sown their pages with this "orient pearl," and brought thus an impulse from divine inspiration, to add to the effect of their own. Extracts from the Bible always attest and vindicate their origin. They nerve what else in the sentences in which they occur is pointless; they clear a space for themselves, and cast a wide glory around the page where they are found. Taken from the *classics* of the *heart*, all hearts vibrate more or less strongly to their voice. It is even as David felt of old toward the sword of Goliath, when he visited the high-priest, and said, "There is none like that, give it me;" so writers of true taste and sympathies feel on great occasions, when they have certain thoughts and feelings to express, a longing for that sharp two-edged sword, and an irresistible inclination to cry, "None like that, give it us; this right Damascus blade alone can cut the way of our thought into full utterance and victory."

And did the bearing of those inspired men correspond with their sentiments and speech? It did. The Hebrew prophet, in his highest form, was a solitary and salvage man, residing with lions, when he was not waylaying kings, on whose brow the scorching sun of Syria had charactered its fierce and swarthy

hue, and whose dark eye swam with a fine insanity, gathered from solitary communings with the sand, the sea, the mountains, and the sky, as well as with the light of a divine afflatus. He had lain in the cockatrice's den; he had put his hand on the hole of the asp; he had spent the night on lion-surrounded trees, and slept and dreamed amid their hungry roar; he had swam in the Dead Sea, or haunted, like a ghost, those dreary caves which lowered around it; he had drank of the melted snow on the top of Lebanon; at Sinai, he had traced and trod on the burning footprints of Jehovah; he had heard messages at midnight, which made his hair to arise, and his skin to creep; he had been wet with the dews of the night, and girt by the demons of the wilderness; he had been tossed up and down, like a leaf, upon the strong and veering storm of his inspiration. He was essentially a lonely man, cut off, by gulf upon gulf, from tender ties and human associations. He had no home; a wife he might be permitted to marry, but, as in the case of Hosea, the permission might only be to him a curse, and to his people an emblem, and when (as in the case of Ezekiel) her death became necessary as a sign, she died, and left him in the same austere seclusion in which he had existed before. The power which came upon him cut, by its fierce coming, all the threads which bound him to his kind, tore him from the plow, or from the pastoral solitude, and hurried him to the desert, and thence to the foot of the throne, or to the wheel of the triumphal chariot. And how startling his coming to crowned or conquering guilt! Wild from the wilderness, bearded like its lion-lord; the fury of God glaring in his eye; his mantle heaving to his heaving breast; his words stern, swelling, tinged on their edges with a terrible poetry; his attitude dignity; his gesture power—how did he burst upon the astonished gaze; how swift and solemn his entrance; how short and spirit-like his stay; how dreamy, yet distinctly dreadful, the impression made by his words long after they had ceased to tingle on the ears; and how mysterious the solitude into which he seemed to melt away! Poet, nay prophet, were a feeble name for such a being. He

was a momentary incarnation—a meteor kindled at the eye, and blown on the breath, of the Eternal.

To much of this description all the prophets answer; but we have had in our eye principally Elijah, whom God testified to be the greatest of the family, by raising him to heaven. Sudden as a vision of the night, he stands up before Ahab, the evil King of Israel, and the historian no more thinks of recounting his ancestry, than he would of tracing that of a dream. He delivers his message, and instantly retires from the scene. We see him, however, a little afterward, in a poor widow's dwelling; and lo! he breathes upon her handful of meal, and blesses her cruse of oil, and they are multiplied a thousandfold; and when death stops the dearer fountain of her son's life, he has but to bow himself three times upon the child, and the spring shut up softly opens again. He appears after this on Carmel—meet pedestal for a statue so sublime! He had previously burst a second time into Ahab's presence, and, careless of the exclamation, "Art thou he that troublest Israel?" had challenged him, and Baal, his god, and Baal's prophets, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves, four hundred, to meet him on Carmel, and have the question of the land and of the age—is Baal, or is Jehovah God?—there decided, by an appeal to the ancient, the chainless, the impartial element of fire. It is the question of this age, too! Show us the fire of heaven, still burning and vestal, in any church, and it sufficeth us; for Christ came to send fire upon earth, and what will we, if it have gone out in white and barren ashes? The God that answereth by fire answered Elijah, and the sun, his archer, loosened a ray which consumed burnt-sacrifice, wood, stones, dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. We see him next, a girt and glorious homicide, standing at the brook Kishon, and there, with knife moving to the music of God's voice, slaying the false prophets, "heaps upon heaps." We again find him compelling clouds and rain from the brassy sky, and, "through fire and water," running before Ahab's chariot, to the entrance of Jezreel. We follow him, then, a fugitive from Jezebel's vengeance,

on his way toward Horeb, the mount of God; fed by an angel lodging in a cave; hearing afar off the voice of Jehovah; watching the couriers of the divine coming—the wind, the earthquake, the fire; and at last made aware of that coming itself, in the still small voice, and covering his face with a mantle, as he came out to the mouth of the cave. Instructed in the duties he had to perform during his brief remaining career, cheered by the tidings of seven thousand who had not bent the knee to Baal, and prepared by that celestial colloquy for the great change at hand, we see him returning to the haunts of men—anointing Elisha his successor—once more "finding" guilty Ahab, who trembles in his presence more than if the ghost of Naboth had stood up before him—and, as his last public act, bringing down new forks of flame upon the fifties and their captains, who in vain sought him to prophesy health and life to the dying Ahaziah. We see him, then, turning his slow majestic steps toward the Jordan, oft reverting his eyes to the mountains of his native land, which he is leaving forever; shaking off by his stride like gossamer the inquisitive sons of the prophets, till Elisha and he are seen moving on alone; his eye waxing brighter, and his step quicker, and his port loftier, as he talks to his companion, and approaches the stream; standing for a moment silent on its brink—lifting then his mantle, wrapping it together, smiting the waters, and they part hither and thither; resuming, on the other side, the high converse, but now, with eager glances cast ever and anon onward; at length, meeting the fiery chariot, mounting it, as a king his car, and carried, without a moment's delay, in a rushing whirlwind upward—his mantle falling, and Elisha exclaiming, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" We may not farther or fully follow his triumphal progress, but, doubtless, as like a prince he had mounted the chariot, so with prince-like majesty did he direct the fiery steeds, gaze around on the peopled wilderness of worlds, outstrip the comet's glowing wheel, rise above the sun, and the sun's sun, and every system from which the sun's system is visible, cross the firmaments

of space, pass through the gates into the city, enter amid the rising, welcoming, and wondering first-born of heaven, and at last merge in the engulfing glory of the great white throne.

Such honor have not all God's saints, nor have had all his prophets. But surely here the dignity of the prophetic office came to its height, when, in the fullness of its discharge, it swelled up into heaven, and when he, who, in the native grandeur of his commission, had walked among men as a being of another race, was lifted up before his time, like a pearl from the dust, and added to an immortal and sinless company.

We mention as the last general characteristic of Hebrew poetry, its high moral tone and constant religious reference. Without occupying the full position of Dr. Johnson, in his celebrated *ex cathedra* and *à priori* sentence against sacred poetry, we are forced to admit that, of sacred poetry, in its higher acceptation, we have had little, and that our sacred poets are few. There are, we think, but three poets—Dante, Milton, and Cowper—entitled at once to the terms sacred and great. Giles and Phineas Fletcher, James and Robert Montgomery, Milman, Pollok, Trench, and Keble, are sacred poets, and much of their poetry is true and beautiful; but the shy epithet "great" will hardly alight on any one of their heads. Spenser, Cowley, Pope, Addison, Scott, Wordsworth, Wilson, Coleridge, and Southey, have all written sacred poems (Coleridge's Hymn to Mont Blanc, and Scott's Hymn of Rebecca, in Ivanhoe, are surpassed only by the Hebrew bards); but none of them is properly a sacred poet. For some of the best of our sacred verses, we are indebted to such men as Christopher Smart, John Logan, and William Knox. Of the tribe of ordinary hymn writers, whose drawl and lisping drivel—whose sickening sentimentalism—whose unintentional blasphemies of familiarity with divine things and persons—whose profusion of such fulsome epithets as "sweet Jesus," "dear Lord," "dear Christ," &c., render them so undeservedly popular, what need we say, unless it be to express our surprise that a stern Scottish taste, accustomed to admire the "Dies Irae," our own rough but

manly version of the Psalms, and our own simple and unpretending Paraphrases, should dream of introducing into our sanctuaries the trash commonly known as hymns! The writer of sacred poetry should be himself a sacred poet, for none else can continuously, or at large, write what both the critic and the Christian will value, though for different reasons—the Christian for its spirit and tendency, the critic for its thorough artistic adaptation to the theme.

The Hebrew poet was nothing, if not sacred. To him, the poetical and the religious were almost the same. Song was the form instinctively assumed by all the higher moods of his worship. He was not surprised into religious emotion and poetry by the influence of circumstances, nor stung into it by the pressure of remorse. He was not religious only when the organ was playing, nor most so—like Burns and Byron—on a sunshiny day. Religion was with him a habitual feeling, and from the joy or the agony of that feeling poetry broke out irrepressibly. To him, the question "Are you in a religious mood to-day?" had been as absurd as "Are you alive to-day?" for all his moods—whether high as heaven or low as hell—whether wretched as the penitence of David, or triumphant as the rapture of Isaiah—were tinged with the religious element. From God he sank, or up to him he soared. The grand theocracy around ruled all the soul and all the song of the bard. Wherever he stood—under the silent starry canopy, or in the congregation of the faithful—musing in solitary spots, or smiting, with high, hot, rebounding hand, the loud cymbal—his feeling was, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." In him, surrounded by sacred influences, haunted by sacred recollections, moving through a holy land, and overhung by a heavenly presence, religion became a passion, a patriotism, and a poetry. Hence, the sacred song of the Hebrews stands alone; and hence we may draw the deduction, that its equal we shall never see again, till again religion enshrine the earth with an atmosphere as it then enshrined Palestine—till poets are the organs, not only of their

personal belief, but of the general sentiment around them, and have become but the high-priests in a vast sanctuary, where all shall be worshipers, because all is felt to be divine. How this high and solemn reference to the Supreme Intelligence and Great Whole comes forth in all the varied forms of Hebrew poetry! Is it the pastoral?—The Lord is the shepherd. Is it elegy?—It bewails his absence. Is it ode?—It cries aloud for his return, or shouts his praise. Is it the historical ballad?—It recounts his deeds. Is it the penitential psalm?—Its climax is, "Against *thee* only have I sinned." Is it the didactic poem?—Running down through the world, like a sythed chariot, and hewing down before it all things as vanity, it clears the way to the final conclusion, "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Is it a "burden," tossed, as from a midnight mountain, by the hand of lonely seer, toward the lands of Egypt and Babylon?—It is the burden of the Lord; his the handful of devouring fire flung by the fierce prophet. Is it apologue, or emblem?—God's meaning lies in the hollow of the parable; God's eye glares the "terrible crystal" over the rushing wheels. Even the love-canticle seems to rise above itself, and behold a greater than Solomon, and a fairer than his Egyptian spouse, are here. Thus, from their poetry, as from a thousand mirrors, flashes back the one awful face of their God.

CHAPTER III.

VARIETIES OF HEBREW POETRY.

It is common for a new writer on any subject to commence his work with open, or with gently insinuated, depreciation of those who have preceded him, or, at least, in the course of it, to "damn them with faint praise," or to hint and hesitate out strong but suppressed dislike. *Not* in conformity with this custom, we propose to commence this chapter by candidly characterizing the principal writers on Hebrew poetry, with whom we are acquainted.

By far the most generally known of those writers is Bishop Lowth, the fourth edition of whose "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews," translated from the Latin by G. Gregory, F.R.S., with notes by Michaelis and others, now lies before us. To use a term which this author himself employs *ad nauseam*, Lowth's book is a very "elegant" production. It is written in a round, fluent, and perspicuous style; abounds in learning and ingenious criticism; is full to overflowing of specimens selected, and in general re-translated, from the Hebrew bards; shows a warm love for their more prominent excellencies, and an intimate knowledge of their mechanical structure; and did good service for their fame when first published To say, however, that it is ever more than "elegant," or ever rises to the "height of its great argument," were to compliment it too highly. It contains, indeed, much judicious criticism, some good writing, and a few touches of highly felicitous panegyric; but, as a whole, it is tame almost to mediocrity—squares the Hebrew poetry too much by the standard of the Greek and

Latin classics—displays little or no kindred genius—dilutes and deadens the portions of the Bible it professes to render into English verse—bears too decidedly the stamp of the eighteenth century—and does not at all fulfill its own expressed ideal, "He who would feel the peculiar and interior elegances of the Hebrew poetry, must imagine himself exactly situated as the persons for whom it was written, or even as the writers themselves—he is to feel as a Hebrew, to read Hebrew as the Hebrews would have read it." Lowth is very little of a Hebrew, and the point of view he occupies is far below the level of the "hills of holiness." His criticism bears not even the proportion to the subject which Pope's "Messiah" does to its original; it wants subtilty, power, and abandonment. Much of his general preliminary matter is now obsolete, and the account which he gives of the individual writers is meager. He supplies a series of anatomical sketches, not of living portraits. He is to David and Isaiah what Warton was to Shakspeare, or Blair to Homer and Virgil. His translator has not been able altogether to overcome the air of stiffness which adheres to all English versions from the Latin. Nor do the notes by Michaelis add much to the book's value. They have, indeed, much learning, but their literary criticism is alike despicable and profane. "Ezekiel," says our learned Theban, "does not strike with admiration, nor exhibit any trait of sublimity." Truly, over such a critic all the wheels of Chebar would roll in vain, for what impression can be made on insensate and infidel dust? Even a mule would be awe-struck in the gorge of Glencoe, but a mule is only a relation to Michaelis. His translator sounds a deeper deep, and actually accuses Ezekiel of the bathos!

Such was the criticism of the past age. Rarely did it reach, in any of its altitudes of praise, a term higher than the aforesaid "elegant"—a term which, while accurately measuring Pope and Addison, looks, when connected with Moses and Isaiah, ludicrously inadequate. The age, of which this was the superlative, could scarcely measure the poetry of that which

saw and sung the highest beauty and the loftiest grandeu embracing each other in the Temple under the shadow of

> "Jehovah thundering out of Zion, throned
> Between the cherubim."

Lowth, to do him justice, deserved better company than Michaelis or Gregory. His step round the awful sanctities of Hebrew song is the light and trembling step of a timid lover; and, for the sake of his love and sincerity, much must be forgiven him, even although the oblivion demanded for his faults should at last engulf his merits too. Yet, as an inscription on a tombstone is often read, and is sometimes spared, for its Latinity, it may be hoped that so many fine and rolling periods, in the tongue of Cicero, shall long resist decay, even after they have ceased to be regarded with the former degree of respect and admiration.

Herder was a man of "another spirit;" and his report of the good land of Hebrew poetry, compared to Lowth's, is that of a Caleb or Joshua, to that of an ordinary Jewish spy. He does not climb from Parnassus to Lebanon, but descends on it from the "mountains of the East"—from a keen admiration and intimate knowledge of the spirit and genius of all oriental tribes and poets. He "feels as a Hebrew, and has read Hebrew as the Hebrews read it." He has himself a winged soul, and can transport his reader along with him into the very heart of a former age, enabling him to realize its old life, to feel its old habits hanging softly around him, to throb with its old ambitions, to talk fluently its old language, and to climb as far up as the mists of its old prejudices. Thus to plunge into the past was competent only to a "diver lean and strong;" and Herder, so far, has done it nobly. He has developed, in a masterly manner, the sources from which Hebrew poetry sprung; the ideas of God, nature, man, and the future world, which it represented, and the influences radiated upon it from the heat of the Hebrew climate and the impassioned temperament of the Hebrew bosom. He has defended, too, with force and gusto, the form of Hebrew versification, and the copiousness of its

diction. His versions of particular passages are always spirited and poetical. Above all, he catches fire from his theme, and the commentary is often only a "little lower" than the text. Still, the book is a fragment. The author never filled up its outline. Neither the larger nor lesser prophets are included in it. A shade of neologism will always mar its effect on the popular British mind. Nor will that be enhanced, when it is known that the author, ere his death, modified many of its views, relinquished, in a great measure, his taste for the simple, primitive, and unconscious kinds of poetry, and adopted, in exchange, a preference for cultured and classical song. Such, however, is the power of poetic enthusiasm, that the heretic Herder dismisses his intelligent readers with a profounder reverence for the Scriptures, as well as a keener sense of their poetic beauty, than the British bishop, nor can his work ever cease to fill a niche, and attract admirers of its own. It is a true and a beautiful thing, and must be a "joy forever."

With the third of the three works, which have constituted epochs in the modern criticism of Hebrew poetry—that, namely, of Dr. Ewald—we have but recently become acquainted. It avows great pretensions to minute accuracy and profound investigation, and seems, indeed, as a scientific treatise, incomparably better than either of its predecessors. But its literature is not quite equal to its knowledge. Its criticism is too often verbal; more regard is paid to the vestments, or to the body, than to the spirit of the various strains; it systematically sacrifices the later to the earlier literature of the Hebrews; compared to Herder, its tone is cold; and its many German peculiarities can never permit it to be naturalized in our country, invaluable as it must remain to the Scriptural scholar and the critic.

Besides these, we know nothing of much mark on the subject, except the brilliant sketches of Eichhorn; the well-written, compact, and rapid biographies of the various bards in Dr. Eadie's "Biblical Cyclopædia;" and an interesting little volume by Dr. Macculloch of Greenock, entitled, "Literary Characteristics of the Scriptures."

The principal of the different writers thus enumerated and characterized have differently classified the varieties of Hebrew poetry.

Dr. Lowth divides it into prophetic, elegiac, didactic, lyric, idyllic, and dramatic. To this arrangement, some objections may be stated. First, It is not a natural arrangement, seeing that lyrical poetry unquestionably preceded all the others. Secondly, It is not an accurate or logical arrangement, since, 1st, It is difficult to distinguish idyllic from lyric poetry—the one is but a species of the other; and since, 2dly, prophetic poetry, so far from being distinct from any, included by turns all the enumerated varieties. Dr. Lowth, too, excludes Jonah and Daniel from the list of prophet-poets, because their writings have no metrical structure or poetical style—a canon which would degrade to dusty prose the "Be light" of God, and the golden rule of Christ.

Herder's division is very general. Hebrew poetry, with him, consists of two leading forms—the figurative speech and the song. The most eloquent writers in the first kind were the prophets, and the most sublime lyrical effusions were the songs of the Temple. He adds, "Whether these two kinds were expanded into ampler forms, as the drama and heroic poetry, will be shown hereafter." That hereafter never fully came, although, from hints he throws out, he did find the heroic poem in the history written by Moses, and the drama in Solomon's Song and Job.

Dr. Ewald's arrangement is much more logical than Lowth's, and more minute than Herder's. It deserves, therefore, a somewhat fuller analysis. He commences by combating the common notion, that epic poetry is the earliest. It is often, indeed, the first written, but has probably been preceded by lyrics, which have vanished without leaving a trace. Nay, in some nations, it is quite unknown; but no nation has wanted its early lyrical poetry, whether preceding or cotemporaneous with the epic. The lyric, therefore, must be the earlier of the two. There are, besides, special reasons connected with the temperament and

faith of the Hebrews, why lyrics should have had the start of epics. The epic requires "tranquillity and reserve of thought, self-possessed art, and rigid restraint of enthusiasm;" whereas "suddenness of emotion and act, intensity and vivacity of simple and impressible feelings, the highest tension and rapid collapse of imagination," are characteristic of the Hebrew nation. The epic poet, moreover, is "aided by a rich, developed, and, at the same time, pliable mythology; whereas, the religion of the Hebrews is very grave and austere" (and, Ewald might have added, "*true*"), "and leaves little room for poetic conception." As lyrical poetry was first, so it continued, for a long time, sole occupant of the field. Ewald describes it as possessing the widest compass, and reflecting the whole life of the nation at all times and in all circumstances; as having its essential peculiarity in its musical form of utterance and delivery—it was immortal thought married to vocal or instrumental melody; and as divided, according to its subjects, into various species: such as the hymn which commemorated some joyful or great event, witness the 29th, 46th, and 48th Psalms; the dirge, such as David's lament for Saul and Jonathan, and such songs of mourning for the calamities of the land, as the 44th, 60th, and 73d Psalms; the dithyrambic, an irregular, wild, and excited strain, the sole specimens of which occur in the 7th Psalm and in the 3d chapter of Habakkuk; the love-song, such as the 45th Psalm; the prayer, in which, as in the 17th, 86th, and 102d Psalms, the devotional prevails over the poetical element; and, lastly, the sententious, satiric song, to be met with in the 14th, 58th, and 82d Psalms, and which constitutes a link connecting the lyrical with the second variety of Hebrew poetry. This Ewald calls gnomic poetry. In it, feeling is solidified into sentiment; general truths take the place of individual impressions; lyric rapture is exchanged for almost philosophic calm; the style becomes less diffuse, and more sententious; the form of verse remains, but the accompaniments of song and music are abandoned and forgotten. The rise of this poetry testifies to the advance of a people in the power of generaliza-

tion, and shows that a quantity of experience has been accumulated into a national stock. In Israel, it commenced with Solomon. Lyric poetry is a spray which rises from troubled waters, such as rolled in David's time; but gnomic poetry is the calm ripple upon an ocean of peace. It necessarily united itself with the floating proverbial literature of the country. From simple sententiousness it gradually swelled into oratory, snatched up fitfully the lyre it had thrown aside, or diverged into dramatic form, touching thus upon the third variety of Hebrew song. This is the drama. No regular shape of it, indeed, nor any approximation to a theater, a stage, or the many arts and contrivances connected with it, are to be found among the Hebrews. But the simple beginning and foundation of dramatic poetry may be traced in their poetry. This Ewald finds in the Song of Songs, "which appears as if designed for a stage, albeit a very simple one, which develops winged speeches of several persons, a complete action, and in the course of the whole admits definite pauses of the action, which are only suited to the drama." Job, too, seems to him a sublime drama, which, in comparison with the Song, may be called a tragedy.

Proceeding at some length to analyze the Song, he finds in it various characters—a chorus, an action, a happy termination, and a strong and lively moral. In this he is very successful; but his preconception as to the late origin of the book of Job, leads him to over-estimate the art, and somewhat to underrate the natural force and genius of that marvelous poem.

For epic poetry, he searches in vain, amid the earlier portions of the Hebrew literature, but descries its late beginnings, in Tobit, Judith, and some other of the apocryphal books.

Such is Ewald's classification. It is excellent in some things, but, in the first place, it omits altogether the prophetic writers. These Ewald appears to regard as the orators of the land, rather than as its noblest and loftiest poets. Secondly, it slurs over the truly epical character of the historical books of the Old Testament. Is not Exodus itself a great epic, as well as a true

history, containing all the constituents of that species of poetry? Thirdly, It rather oddly finds the commencement, if not the climax, of the *degeneracy* of Hebrew literature in the book of Job, which bears internal evidence of being the earliest as well as the most sublime poem in the world. We wonder Ewald had not also sought to prove that "Prometheus Vinctus" was written after the subjugation of Greece by the Romans. We fancy a subtile critic, in the thirtieth century, starting the theory that "Macbeth" was translated from the German of Kotzebue, and falsely imputed to Shakspeare! Fourthly, Ewald's principle of arrangement excludes altogether the *prose-poetry* of Scripture —not the least interesting and impressive—which abounds in the historical books, and constitutes the staple of the entire volume.

Without intending strictly to abide by it in our after-chapters, we may now propound a division of our own. We would arrange Hebrew poetry under the two general heads of Song and Poetic Statement. We give the particulars which fal under this general division.

We have first Song—

Exulting—in odes of triumph—Psalm cl.
Insulting—in strains of irony and invective—Psalm cix.
Mourning—over calamities—Psalm lxxi., Lamentations.
Worshiping—God—Psalm civ.
Loving—in friendly or amatory songs—Psalm xlv.
Reflecting—in gnomic or sententious strains—Psalm cxxxix., Proverbs.
Interchanging—in the varied persons and parts of the simple drama—Job and Song.
Wildly-luxuriating—as in Psalm vii., Habakkuk iii.
Narrating—the past deeds of God to Israel, the simple epic—Psalm lxxviii., Exodus, &c.
Predicting—the future history of the church and the world—Prophetic Writings.

We have second, Poetical Statement, or Statement–

1st, Of poetic facts (creation, &c.).
2d, Of poetic doctrines (God's spirituality).

3d, Of poetic sentiments, with or without figurative language (golden rule, &c.).

4th, Of poetic symbols (in Zechariah, Revelation, &c.).

In support of this division, we maintain, first, that it is comprehensive, including every real species of poetry in Scripture —including, specially, the prophetic writings, the New Testament, and that mass of seed poetry in which the Book abounds, apart from its professedly rhythmical and figured portions. Song and statement appear to include the Bible between them, and the statement is sometimes more poetical than the song. If aught evade this generalization, it is the *argument* which is charily sprinkled throughout the Epistles of Paul. Even that is logic defining the boundaries of the loftiest poetry. All else, from the simple narrations of Ezra and Nehemiah, up to the most ornate and oratorical appeals of the prophets, is genuinely poetic, and ought by no means to be excluded from the range of our critical explication and panegyric. Surely the foam on the brow of the deep is not all its poetry, is not more poetical than the vast billows on which it swells and rises, and rather typifies than exhausts the boundless power and beauty which are below. "God is a spirit," or "God is love," contains, each sentence, a world of poetic beauty, as well as divine meaning. Indeed, certain prose sentences constitute the essence of all the poetry in the Scriptures. Round the rule "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind, and all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself," revolve the moral beauties and glories of both Testaments; its praises are chanted alike by Sinai's thunders and the temple songs; round it cluster the Psalms, and on it hang the Prophets. What planetary splendors gather and circle about the grand central truth contained in the opening verse, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and about the cognate statement, "The Lord our God is one Lord!" And how simple that sentence which unites the psalmodies of earth and of heaven in one reverberating chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" Truly the songs of Scripture are mag-

nificent, but its statements are "words unutterable," which it is not possible for the tongue of man to utter!

Secondly, Our division is simple, and is thus better fitted to the simplicity of the Hebrew poetry. It disguises less elaborately, and dresses less ostentatiously, the one main thing which lies within all the rhythmical books of the Bible. That one thing is lyrical impulse and fire. "Still its speech is song," whether one or many speakers be introduced, and whether that song mourn or rejoice, predict or instruct, narrate or adore. The Song of Solomon is a song, not a drama; or let us call it a dramatic song. Job is a lyrical drama, or dramatic lyric. The histories are song-sprinkled narratives, facts moving to the sound of music and dancing. And the prophets seem all to stand, like Elisha, beside the kings of Israel and Judah, each one with a minstrel's harp beside him, and to it and the voice of accompanying song, there break the clouds and expand the landscapes of futurity.

This lyrical impulse was not, however, the mere breath of human genius. It was the "wind of God's mouth," the immediate effect of a divine afflatus. This, former critics too much overlook. They find art where they ought to find inspiration; or they cry out "genius," when they ought to say, with solemn reverence and whispered breath, "God." And by preserving, more entirely than others, the lyrical character of all Hebrew poetry, we supply this third reason for the adoption of our classification—It links the effect more closely with its cause—it exhibits all Hebrew song, whether simple or compound, from Moses down to Malachi, as stirred into being by one Great Breath—finding in the successive poets and prophets, so many successive lyres for the music, soft or stormy, high or low, sad or joyful, which it wished to discourse. To say that all those lyres were natively of equal sweetness or compass, or that the Breath made them so—that all those poets were naturally, or by inspiration, alike eloquent and powerful, were to utter an absurdity. But is it less absurd to suppose a systematic decline in the fitness and fullness of the lyres—in the eloquence and power

of the prophets—when we remember, first, that Habakkuk, Haggai, and Zechariah, belonged to this latter class; when we remember, secondly, that the latter day of Judah exhibited crises of equal magnitude, and as worthy of poetic treatment, as its earlier; when we remember, thirdly, that the great event, the coming of Christ, to which all the prophets testified, was more clearly revealed to the last of the company; and when we remember, fourthly, that the power who overshadowed Malachi, was the same who inspired Moses—his eye no dimmer, his ear no heavier, his hand no shorter, and his breath no feebler than of old? No! the peculiar prophetic and poetic influence did not gradually diminish, or by inches decay; but whether owing to the sin of the people, or to the sovereignty of God, it seems to have expired in an instant. Prophecy went down at once, like the sun of the tropics, leaving behind it only such a faint train of zodiacal light as we find in the apocryphal books; nor did it re-appear, till it assumed the person of the Prophet of Galilee, and till he who in times past spoke unto the fathers, by the prophets, did, in the last days, speak unto us by his own Son.

CHAPTER IV.

POETRY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

We have intimated already, that, though we have, in the former chapter, classified Hebrew poetry under certain generic heads, we deem it best, in our future remarks, to pursue the method of following it down as we find it in the various writings of Scripture. Such a method will secure variety, will lead to an informal history of the progress of Bible poetry, and prevent any of its prominent writers being overlooked, or lost amid vague and general description.

We meet, first, with that singular collection of books called the Pentateuch—or Five Books of Moses—books which, though containing few professedly poetical passages, are steeped throughout in the essence of poetry.

In the catalogue of Israel's prophetic bards, Moses stands earliest. Poets, indeed, and poetry there had been before him. Some of those aboriginal songs, such as Lamech's speech to his wives, and Jacob's dying words, Moses has himself preserved; but he undoubtedly was the Homer, as well as the Solon of his country. We never can separate his genius from his character, so meek, yet stern; from his appearance, so gravely commanding, so spiritually severe; from his law, "girt with dark thunder and embroidered fires;" and from certain incidents in his history—his figure in the ark, when, at the sight of the strange, richly-attired lady, "Behold the babe wept"—his attitude beside the bush that burned in the wilderness—his sudden entrance into the presence of Pharaoh—his lifting up, with that sinewy, swarthy hand, the rod over the

Red Sea—his ascent up the black precipices of Sinai—his death on Pisgah, with the promised land full in view—his mystic burial in a secret vale by the hand of the Eternal—his position, as the leader of the great Exodus of the tribes, and the founder of a strict, complicated, and magnificent polity—all this has given a supplemental and extraordinary interest to the writings of Moses. Their sublimity arises generally from the calm recital of great events. He is the sternest of all the Scripture writers, and the most laconic. His writings may be called hieroglyphics of the strangest and greatest events in the early part of the world's history. Summing up the work of innumerable ages in the one pregnant sentence with which the book begins, he then maps out in a chapter the arrangements of the present form of the creation, gives the miniature of the original condition of earth's happy inhabitants, and the hieroglyphics of their fall; runs rapidly across the antediluvian patriarchs; gives, graphically, but simply, the grand outlines of the deluge; traces to a short distance the diverging rivers of empire which flowed from the ark; and embarks, in fine, upon the little, but widening stream of the story of Seth's children. When he begins to be anecdotical, the anecdotes are culled from a vast space of ground, which he leaves untouched. He is not a minute and full-length biographer, and never, till he comes to the details of the legal system, does he drop his Spartan garb of short and overleaping narrative, and become simply, yet nobly, diffuse. His style of writing resembles the characters sculptured on the walls of Egyptian temples, lowering over the gates of Thebes, or dim-discovered amid the vaults of the Pyramids, whence he, who afterward "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," drunk in the first draught of inspiration, to be renewed again and again, at holier fountains, till, sublimed by it, he dared to climb a quaking Sinai, and to front a fire-girt God. His style, colored by early familiarity with that strange, silent tongue, partakes here and there of certain of its qualities, its intricate simplicity, its "language within language" of allegorical

meaning, and resembles the handwriting of him who wrote on the wall of the Babylonian palace — "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin."

As a narrator, Moses makes a word or two do the work of pictures. Nor is this word always an *επος πτεροεν*—a word rolled together like a double star—but often a plain, unmetaphorical term, which *quakes* under the thought or scene it describes. The pathos or the grandeur, instead of elevating and enkindling his language, levels and sinks it. His language may be called the mere transparent window through which the "immeasurable calm"—the blue of immensity—looks in. Certainly it is the least figurative of all the Scripture styles. Its simplicity is deeper than that of age's unmoved narratives; it is rather that of infancy, telling some dreadful tale in an undertone, and with upcast looks of awe. It is as if Moses, at the feet of that simulacrum of Deity which he saw on the mount, had become a child; as if the Glory, which might have maddened others, had only sunk him down into the ark of bulrushes again. And, from that hour, dropping all the learning of the Egyptians, the mystic folds of which he had wrapped around him, he is content to be the mere instrument in the Divine hand, and becomes, that meekest man—a boy repeating with quivering voice and heart the lesson his father has taught him. Hence the Fall is recounted without a word of comment or regret; the sight of an ocean-world starts up but one expression which looks like a metaphor—the "windows of heaven;" the journey of Abraham, going forth, not knowing whither he went, in search of a far country—the most momentous journey in the history of man—is told as succinctly and quietly, as are afterward the delinquencies of Er and Judah; through a naked narrative, bursts the deep pathos involved in the story of Joseph; and how telescopic, in its clear calmness, his view of the Ten Plagues, sweeping in their course between the Nile of raging blood and the cry which proclaimed the findings of that fearful morning, when there was not a house but there was one dead—the whole

dread circle of desolation, mourning, and woe. And even when he brings us in sight of Sinai—the proud point in his life the center of his system—the scene, too, of his sublime r for there did he not exceedingly fear and quake?—his description is no more than the bare transcript of its terrors. They are not grouped together, as by Paul afterward; and far less are they exaggerated by rhetorical artifice.

This is the way in which he represents the fierce splendors which gathered around Sinai as the Ancient One descended: "And it came to pass, on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people which were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice."

Nor did this intense simplicity betray any lack of poetical sensibility, or prove Moses a mere stony legislator, fitly typified by the cold tables which received and cooled the red dropping syllables of the "Fiery Law." That, on the contrary, he was actuated by a sublime lyric afflatus, which moved him at times, we have ample evidence in the odes which are found sprinkled through his books. Witness the pean of exultation which, chanted by the voices and cymbals of the millions of Israel, sung the requiem of Pharaoh and his "Memphian Chivalry;" and where, even as the naked storm of vocal sound intermarried and incarnated itself in timbrels and dances, so did the emotions of the lyrist clothe themselves in thick and vaulting imagery. In another strain—more subdued, more melting—does he, in the 90th Psalm, pour out the common plaint of all ages, over the shortness and frailty of life. But deepest the touch of poetry left on his last song, when, in his enthusiasm, he calls

on heaven and earth to give audience to his words, and proceeds to utter what might compel the attention of both, in a song that might be set to the sphere music, or sung in that floating melody—those "mystic snatches of harmonious sound"—which poets say sometimes visit this sad world, smooth its air, appease its hungry restlessness, and strike invisible, unaccountable, but short-lived joy, through all its withered veins.

Moses we have called the Homer of his country; nor is the epithet inappropriate, when we remember that both unite to simplicity that sublimity which flames out of it, like volcanic fire starting from a bare and bleak surface—that pathos which searches, in perfect unconsciousness, the inmost depths of the soul—and that air of Eld, which in both leads back our thoughts to primitive and perished ages, when the human heart, the human soul, the human size, were larger than now—when the heavens were nearer, the skies clearer, the clouds more gorgeous, the foam of the sea brighter, the fat of the earth richer, than in our degenerate days—when the sense of the ideal and the infinite, of the things unseen and eternal, still overtopped the seen, the tangible, and the temporal—when in our groves were still seen the shadows of angels, and on our mountains the smoking footsteps of God.

The effect of Moses upon the history of Hebrew poetry was, as Herder shows, manifold. In the first place, his deeds—the plagues he sent on Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the march through the wilderness, the wars in which he led the people to triumph—furnished fine poetical subjects, of which after-writers availed themselves. His whole system, too, was poetry organized, and hence sprung the songs of the sanctuary n David's and yet later days. Secondly, his own poems, though few, were very striking, and, both from their own power and as proceeding from the great legislator, were calculated to exert an influence on after-poets, who, indeed, made them their models. And, thirdly, Moses even provided for the revival of sacred poetry in times of declension, by the privilege he gave and secured to the prophets. They were the proper successors

of Moses—"watchmen who, when the priests were silent and the great tyrannical," spoke in startling truth and in poetic form to the heart and conscience of the land. Moses was the leader of this noble band, and his deep voice found in them a multitude of echoes, till, in Malachi, it died away in the muttering of the word "curse," which closes the Old Testament record.

One great image in Moses we must not overlook. It is at the crisis of the passage of the Red Sea, where, as the Egyptians are pressing down the dry channels, and treading in the shadows, and just fixing their grasp upon their foes, the Lord, through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, LOOKS unto the host of the Egyptians, and troubles them. That pillar shapes itself into an eye, which sends a separate dismay into each Egyptian heart, and all is felt to be lost. We find two imitations of this in modern poetry—one by Coleridge, in his "Ode on the Departing Year," where he prays God to

> "Open his eye of fire from some uncertain cloud;"

and another, in the "Curse of Kehama," where, after the "Man Almighty," holding his Amreeta cup, had exclaimed—

> "Now, Seeva, look to thine abode!
> Henceforth, on equal footing, we engage
> Alike immortal now, and we shall wage
> Our warfare, God to God,"

it is added, when the cup is drank—

> "Then Seeva opened on the accursed one
> His *eye of anger*—upon him alone
> The wrath-beam fell. He shudders, but *too late.*"

Thus, by far the sublimest passage in Southey's poetry seems colored by, if not copied from, Scripture. *Pharaoh's* eye meeting *Jehovah's* in that grim hour—what a subject for John Martin, or for David Scott, had he been alive!

Herder has not failed to notice the air of solitude which breathes about the poetry, as it did about the character, of Moses. He was the loneliest of men: lonely in his flight from

Egypt—lonely while herding his flock in the wilderness—lonely while climbing Mount Sinai—lonely on the summit, and lonely when descending the sides of the hill—lonely in his death, and lonely in his burial. Even while mingling with the multitudes of Israel, he remained secluded and alone. As the glory which shone on his face insulated him for a time from men, so did all his life his majestic nature. He was among men, but not of them. Stern incarnation of the anger of Omnipotence, thy congenial companions were not Aaron, nor Joshua, nor Zipporah, but the rocks and caves of Horeb, the fiery pillar, the bush burning, the visible glory of the sanctuary, the lightning-wreaths round Sinai's sullen brow, and all other red symbols of Jehovah's presence! With such, like a kindred fire upon one funeral pile, didst thou gloomily embrace and hold still communion! Shade of power not yet perished—sole lord of millions still, wielding the two tables as the scepters of thy extant sovereignty, with thy face flashing back the splendors of the Divine eye, and seeming to descend evermore thy "Thunder-hill of Fear"—it is with a feeling of awful reverence that we bid thee farewell!

CHAPTER V.

POETRY OF THE BOOK OF JOB.

Be the author of the book of Job who he may, he was not Moses. Nothing can be more unlike the curt and bare simplicity of Moses' style, than the broad-blown magnificence of Job. It is like one severe feather, compared to the outspread wing of an eagle. Moses had seen many countries and many men, had studied many sciences, and passed through numerous adventures, which tamed, yet strung his spirit. The author of Job is a contemplative enthusiast, who, the greater part of his life, had been girt in by the rocks of his country, and who, from glowing sand below, and glittering crag around, and torrid sky above, had clothed his spirit and his language with a barbaric splendor. He is a prince, but a prince throned in a wilderness—a sage, but his wisdom has been taught him in the library of the everlasting hills—a poet, but his song is untaught and unmodified by art or learning, as that in which the nightingale hails the hush of evening. The geography of the land of Job is a commentary on its poetry. Conceive a land lorded over by the sun, when lightning, rushing in, like an angry painter, did not dash his wild colors across the landscape; a land ever in extremes—now dried up as in a furnace, now swimming with loud waters—its sky the brightest or the blackest of heavens—desolate crags rising above rank vegetation—beauty adorning the brow of barrenness—shaggy and thunder split hills surrounding narrow valleys and water-courses; a land for a great part bare in the wrath of nature, when not swaddled in sudden tempest and whirlwind a land of lions, and wild

goats, and wild asses, and ostriches, and hawks stretching toward the south, and horses clothed with thunder, and eagles making their nests on high ; a land through whose transparent air night looked down in all her queenlike majesty, all her most lustrous ornaments on—the south blazing through all its chambers as with solid gold—the north glorious with Arcturus and his sons—the zenith crowning the heavens with a diadem of white, and blue, and purple stars. Such the land in which this author lived, such the sky he saw ; and can we wonder that poetry dropped on and from him, like rain from a thick tree ; and that grandeur—a grandeur almost disdaining beauty, preferring firmaments to flowers, making its garlands of the whirlwind—became his very soul. The book of Job shows a mind smit with a passion for nature, in her simplest, most solitary, and elementary forms—gazing perpetually at the great shapes of the material universe, and reproducing to us the infant infinite wonder with which the first inhabitants of the world must have seen their first sunrise, their first thunderstorm, their first moon waning, their first midnight heaven expanding, like an arch of triumph, over their happy heads. One object of the book is to prophesy of nature—to declare its testimony to the Most High—to unite the leaves of its trees, the wings of its fowls, the eyes of its stars, in one act of adoration to Jehovah. August undertaking, and meet for one reared in the desert, anointed with the dew of heaven, and by God himself inspired.

If any one word can express the merit of the natural descriptions in Job, it is the word gusto. You do something more than see his behemoth, his war-horse, and his leviathan : you touch, smell, hear, and handle them too. It is no shadow of the object he sets before you, but the object itself, in its length, breadth, height, and thickness. In this point, he is the Landseer of ancient poetry, and something more. That great painter seems, every one knows, to become the animal he is painting—to intermingle his soul for a season with that of the stag, the horse, or the bloodhound. So Job, with the war-horse, swal

ows the ground with fierceness and rage—with behemoth, moves his tail like a cedar—with the eagle, smells the slain afar off, and screams with shrill and far-heard joy. In the presence of Landseer's figures, you become inspired by the pervading spirit of the picture—you start back, lest his sleeping blood-hound awake—you feel giddy beside his stag on the brow of the mountain—you look at his greyhound's beauty, almost with the admiration which *he* might be supposed to feel, glancing at his own figure, during his leap across the stream. Job's animals seem almost higher than nature's. You hear God describing and panegyrizing his own works, and are not ashamed to feel yourself pawing and snorting with his charger—carrying away your wild scorn and untamable freedom, with the ostrich, into the wilderness—or, with behemoth, drawing in Jordan into your mouth. It may be questioned if Landseer has the very highest imagination—if he be not rather a literal than an ideal painter—if he could, or durst, go down after Jonah into the whale, or exchange souls with the mammoth or megatherium? Job uniformly transcends, while sympathizing with his subjects—casts on them a light not their own, as from the "eyelids of the morning;" and the greater the subject is, he occupies and fills it with the more ease: he dandles his leviathan like a kid. Landseer we have charged, elsewhere, with almost an inhuman sympathy with brutes; and a moral or religious lesson can with difficulty be gathered from his pictures—his dying deer would tempt you, by their beauty, to renew the tragedy; but *Deus est anima brutorum* hangs suspended over Job's colossal drawings, and, as in fable, all his animals utter a moral while passing on before you. Near those descriptions of his, we can place nothing in picture, prose, or poetry, save such lines in Milton as that describing leviathan—

> "Whom God
> Created hugest that swim the ocean stream;"

or Blake's lines—

> "Tiger, tiger, burning bright
> In the deserts of the night,

What immortal hand or eye
Framed thy fearful symmetry?"

Besides those natural descriptions, the poetic elements in Job may be included under the following:—The scene in heaven, the calamities of Job, his first expression of anguish, the vision of Eliphaz, the moral pictures which abound, the praise of Wisdom, the entrance of the Deity, the beauty of the close, and, above all, the great argument pervading the whole. The scene in heaven has always been admired, and often imitated. It struck Byron much; particularly the thought of Satan being actually brought back, as by an invisible chain, to the court of heaven, and compelled to witness its felicity, and subserve the purposes of God. Shelley, again, meditated a tragedy on the subject, which would have been, probably, a very daring and powerful accommodation of Job to his own unhappy notions. Goethe, in his "Faust," and Bayley, in his "Festus," have both imitated this scene. It abounds at once in poetic interest and profound meaning. Job has previously been pictured sitting in peace and prosperity under his vine and fig-tree. He has little about him to excite any peculiar interest. Suddenly the blue curtain of the sky over his head seems to open, the theater of the highest heaven expands, and of certain great transactions there he becomes the unconscious center. What a background now has that still figure! Thus every man always is the hero of a triumph or a tragedy as wide as the universe. Thus "each" is always linked to "all." Thus above each world, too, do heaven and hell stand continually, like the dark and the bright suns of astronomy, and the planets between them. In that highest heaven, a day has dawned of solemn conclave. From their thousand missions of justice and mercy return the sons of God, to report their work and their tidings; and inasmuch as their work has been done, their aspects are equally tranquil, whether their tidings are evil or good. But, behind them,

"A spirit of a different aspect waved
His wings, like thunderclouds, above some coast,

Whose barren beach with frequent wrecks is paved;
His brow was like the deep when tempest-tost."

He is a black spot in this "feast of charity," a scowl amid this splendor, and yet acts as only a foil to its beauty and brightness. Thus all things and beings are in perpetual communication with their center—God; thus even evil brings in its dark, barbaric tribute, and lays it down at his feet, and there is no energy in the universe so eccentric as not to have a path and perihelion around the central sun.

Turning aside from the multitude of worshipers, the Almighty questions the grim spirit, "*Whence* comest thou?"—not, in surprise, "*thou* here?" but, in inquiry, "*whence* hast thou now come?" The reply is, "From going to and fro in the earth." Yes! the earth seems ever that spot of creation round which higher intelligences throng, not on account of the paltry stakes of battles and empires being played therein, but because there a mightier game, as to the reconciliation of man with God (thrilling, though simple words! words containing in them the problem of all theology!), is advancing with dubious aspect, though with certain issue. One man in the land of Uz seems to have attained the solution of that problem. He is at once virtuous and prosperous. Adored by men, he adores God. He is wise, without any special inspiration. He is perfect, but not through suffering. He is clean, without atonement. This man is pointed out by God to Satan, "Behold the type of the Good Man! what thinkest thou of him? Canst thou perceive any flaw in his character? Is he not at once great and good?" The subtile spirit rejoins "that he has never been tried. He is pious because prosperous; let afflictions strip away his green leaves, and they will discover a skeleton stretching out arms of defiance to heaven; or should the tree, remaining itself unmutilated, though stripped of its foliage, droop in submission, yet let its trunk be touched and blasted, curses will come groaning up from the root to the topmost twig, and, falling, it will bow in blasphemy, not in prayer." What is this, but a version of the fiendish insinuation, that there is no real worth or virtue in

man but circumstances may overturn; that religion is just a form of refined selfishness; and that no mode of dealing, whether adverse or prosperous, on the part of God, can produce the desired reconciliation. And the purpose of the entire after-book is, in reply, to prove that affliction, while stripping the tree, and even touching its inner life, only confirms its roots—that affliction not only tries, but purifies and tends to perfect, the sufferer—that individual suffering does not furnish an adequate index to individual culpability—that the tendency of suffering is to throw back the sufferer into the arms of the Great Inflictor, and to suggest the necessity of the medium which can alone complete reconciliation, that, namely, of intercessory sacrifice—that there is something higher than peace or happiness—and, finally, that all this casts a softening and clearing luster upon the sad mysteries of the world, as well as proves the necessity, asserts the possibility, assigns the means, and predicts the attainment, of final reconciliation. But this *reply*, which is the argument of the poem, falls to be considered afterward. The two first chapters are a full statement, in concrete form, of the grand *difficulty*.

The thick succession of Job's calamities is one of the most striking passages in the poem. The conduct of Ford's heroine, who continues to dance on while news of "death, and death, and death," of brother, friend, husband, are brought her in succession, her heart, the while, breaking in secret, has been much admired. But princelier still, and more natural, the figure of the patient patriarch, seated at his tent-door, and listening to message after message of spoil, conflagration, ruin, and death, till, in the course of one curdling hour of agony, he finds himself flockless, serfless, childless, a beggar and a wreck amid all the continued insignia of almost royal magnificence. But his heart breaks not. He does not dash away into the wilderness. He does not throw himself on the ground. He does not tear his white hair in agony. With decent and manly sorrow, he indeed shaves his head, and rends, after the custom of his country, his raiment. But his language is, "Naked came I out of

my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." From some clime of eternal calm seem those accents to descend. The plaints of Prometheus and Lear come from a lower region. The old tree has been shorn by a swift-running and all-encompassing fire of its fair foliage: but it has bent its head in reverence before the whirlwind, ere it passed away. In sculpture, there are a silence and a calm which, in nature, are only found in parts and parcels—a stillness within stillness—the hushing of a hush. But not sculpture itself can fully express the look of resignation (as if all calamity were met and subdued by it) which Job's countenance returned to that sky of ruin which suddenly lowered over the tent of his fathers.

But, alas! all calamity was not met and subdued by it. Other griefs were in store, and the iron must enter into his soul. His patient resolve, firm as the "sinew" of leviathan, was at last subdued; and there broke forth from him that tremendous curse, which has made the third chapter of Job dear to all the miserable. Who can forget the figure of Swift, each revolving birthday, retiring into his closet, shutting the door behind him—not to fast or to pray, but to read this chapter, perhaps, with wild sobs of self-application? Nor could even he wring out thus the last drops of its bitterness. It is still a Marah, near which you trace many miserable footsteps; and never, while misery exists, can its dreary grandeur, its passion for death, the beauty it pours upon the grave, the darkness which, collecting from all glooms and solitudes, it bows down upon the one fatal day of birth, be forgotten. "Let them *bless* it that curse the day," for surely it is the most piercing cry ever uttered in this world of "lamentations, mourning, and woe."

In describing an apparition, as in describing all the other objects collected in his poem, the author of Job has this advantage—his is, so far as we know, the first.

> "He is the first that ever burst
> Into that silent sea"

of shadows, dreams, and all the other fears and marvels of the night. Is it asked, how ought an apparition to be represented? We reply, as it *ought* to be *seen*. With a certain preceding consciousness, the shadow of the approaching shade, with fear shaking every bone, but overpowering no part of the man—with hair shivering, but with eye fixed and strained in piercing intensity of vision—with the perception of a form without distinct outline, of a motion without sound, of a fixed position without figure, of a voice so faint, "that nothing lives 'twixt it and silence"—with a strange spiritual force from within rising up to bear the burden, and meet the communion of an unearthly presence—and with the passing away of that burden, like the gradual dropping of a load of heavy gloom from the mind; thus could we conceive a man, bold in spirit, strong in health, and firm in faith, meeting a messenger from the dead. And thus has Eliphaz described his visitor. It is the hour of night. He is alone on his couch. A shudder, like the sigh of a spirit, passes over him. This shudder strengthens till every fiber of his frame shakes. Then he becomes "aware" of the presence and transit of a spiritual being, and every hair on his flesh starts up to do him homage. This motion not heard, stills into a form not seen. In awful balance between matter and spirit, hangs the dim shade before the strained, yet unmaddened eye. And then a voice, fainter than a whisper, but more distinct, trembling between sound and silence, is heard, "How can man be more just than God, or mortal man more just than his Maker?" To paint a shade is surely the most difficult of achievements. But here Eliphaz seizes, in the inspired glance of one sentence, the middle point vibrating between the two worlds. Not so successfully has Milton assayed to set chaos before us, in language jarring and powerful almost as the tumultuous surge it describes, and by images culled from all elements of contradiction, confusion, and unrule.

Innumerable since have been the poetical descriptions, as well as pictorial representations, of ghosts and ghost-scenes. But the majority are either too gross or too shadowy. Some have

painted their ghosts too minutely; they have made an inventory of a spirit—head, hair, teeth, feet, dress, and all, are literally represented, till our terror sinks into disgust, or explodes into laughter. Thus Monk Lewis describes his fiend, as *hoarse* with the vapors of hell. Thus, while Shakspeare clothes his ghost with complete steel, an inferior genius since makes the steel of his ghostly warrior red-hot. Others dilute their vapory apparitions till they vanish quite away. One author is deep in the knowledge of panic terror (Brockden Brown). He makes you fear as much in company as alone, as much at noon as at midnight—he separates the shiver of supernatural fear from the consciousness of a supernatural presence, and gives you it entire, "lifting the skin from the scalp to the ankles." But this, though a rare power, evades the difficulty of representing a spirit. Perhaps Scott, the painter, and Southey, the poet, have succeeded best: Scott in his Demon of the Cape appearing to Vasco de Gama, and Southey in his famed description of Arvalan appearing to Kailyal.

"A nearer horror met the maiden's view;
For right before her a dim form appeared—
A human form in that black night,
Distinctly shaped by its own lurid light—
Such light as the sickly moon is seen to shed
Through spell-raised fogs, a bloody, baleful red.
That specter fixed his eyes upon her full;
The light which shone in their accursed orbs
Was like a light from hell,
And it grew deeper, kindling with the view.
She could not turn her sight
From that infernal gaze, which, like a spell,
Bound her, and held her rooted to the ground.
It palsied every power.
Her limbs availed her not in that dread hour:
There was no moving thence.
Thought, memory, sense, were gone.
She heard not now the tiger's nearer cry
She thought not on her father now;
Her cold heart's-blood ran back;

Her hand lay senseless on the bough it clasped;
Her feet were motionless;
Her fascinated eyes,
Like the stone eyeballs of a statue, fixed,
Yet conscious of the sight that blasted them."

This is genius, but genius laboring to be afraid. In Job, it is mere man trembling in the presence of a spiritual power.

The moral pictures in Job are even more wonderful, when we consider the period. Society was then a narrow word—a colossal fixture, without play, fluctuation, or fluent, onward motion. From this, you might have expected much sameness in the descriptions of character; and yet there is a great variety. In the several pictures of the misery of the wicked, not only is the imagery almost prodigally varied, but there are new traits of character introduced into each. Job's account of the state of his prosperity is famous for redundancy of beautiful figures. It is itself a cornucopia. And how interesting the glimpses given us of the manners and customs of a pastoral and primitive age! None of the landscapes of Claude Titian or Poussin equal these. We see

"A pastoral people, native there,
Who, from the Elysian, soft, and sunny air,
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold
Simple and generous, innocent and bold."

All that has since occurred on the bustling stage of the world is forgotten as a dream. That innocent, beautiful life seems the only reality.

The praise of wisdom must not be overlooked. It is the anticipation of an answer to Pilate's question, "What is truth?" That did not, or at least ought not to have meant, what is the absolute truth of all things?—a question equivalent to, what is Omniscience?—but, what is that portion of the universal truth, what the extract from its volume, which can satisfy the soul, coincide with conscience, give a sense of safety, and form a firm pillow for the bed of death?

To this question, many insufficient and evasive answers have been returned. Science has sought for truth in fields, and mines, and furnaces—in atoms and in stars—and has found many glittering particles, but not any such lump of pure gold, any such "sum of saving knowledge," as is entitled to the name of *the* truth. "The sea saith, It is not in me." *The* truth grows not among the flowers of the field, sparkles not among the gems of the mine; no crucible can extract it from the furnace, no microscope detect it in the depths, and no telescope descry it in the heights of nature. Art, too, has advanced to reply. Her votaries have gazed at the loveliness of creation; they have listened to her voice, they have watched the stately steps of her processes; and that loveliness they have sought to imitate in painting, those steps to follow in architecture, and those voices to repeat in music and in song. But painting must whisper back to poetry, poetry repeat to music, and music wail out to architecture—"It is not in us." Others, again, have followed a bolder course. Regarding art as trifling, and even science as shallow, they have aspired to enter with philosophy into the springs and secrets of things, and to compel truth herself to answer them from her inmost shrine. But too often, in proportion to their ambition, has been their failure. We sicken as we remember the innumerable attempts which have been made, even by the mightiest minds, to solve the insoluble, to measure the immense, to explain the mysterious. From such have proceeded many cloudy falsehoods, a few checkered gleams, of clear light little, but *the* truth has still remained afar. "The *deep* saith, Not in me." Nay, others have, in desperation, plunged, professedly in search of truth, into pleasure or guilt; they have gone to hell-gate itself, and have asked, Does the truth dwell here? but destruction and death only say, with hollow laughter, "We have heard the fame of it with our ears."

Standing above the prospective wreck of all such abortive replies the author of Job discloses that path which the "vulture's eye hath not seen," and the gates of which no golden key

can open—"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding." Simple the finger-post, but it points out the truth. Here, at last, we find that portion of the universal knowledge, truth, or wisdom, which satisfies without cloying the mind—which reflects the inner man of the heart as "face, face in a glass"—which gives a feeling of firm ground below us, firm if there be *terra firma* in the universe—and on which have reposed, in death, the wisest of mankind. Newton laid not his dying head on his "Principia," but on his Bible; Cowper, not on his "Task," but on his Testament; Hall, not on his wide fame, but on his "humble hope;" Michael Angelo, not on that pencil which alone coped with the grandeurs of the "Judgment," but on that grace which, for him, shore the judgment of its terrors; Coleridge, not on his limitless genius, but on "Mercy for praise, to be forgiven for fame." Often must the wanderer amid American forests lay his head upon a rude log, while above it is the abyss of stars. Thus the weary, heavy-laden, dying Christian leans upon the rugged and narrow Cross, but looks up the while to the beaming canopy of immortal life—to those "things which are above."

Calmly does Job propound the great maxim of man, though it might have justified even excess of rapture. Archimedes ran out shouting "Eureka!" Had he found the truth? No, but only one golden sand upon the shore of science. Nay, though he had found out all natural knowledge at once; suppose he had, by one glance of genius, descried the axletree whence shoot out all the spokes of scientific truth—though louder far, in this case, had been his Eureka, and deeper far his joy—would he have found the truth? No; it was in the wilderness of Arabia, and to the heart of an holy herdsman, that this inspiration at first came, and no cry of triumph proclaimed its coming, and no echo then reverberated it to the nations.

The entrance of the Deity into this poem is the most daring and the most successfu of all poetic interventions. God himself turns the scale of the great argument. The bearing of

his speech upon the whole scope of the poem falls afterward to be noted. Meantime let us look at the circumstances of his appearance, and at the mode of his utterance. The disputants have enveloped themselves in a cloud of words. A whirlwind must now scatter it. They have been looking at the silver and golden sides of the shield; both must now be blended and lost in the common darkness of the shadow of God. No vehicle for this awful umpire like a whirlwind. We can not paint an oriental whirlwind; but, some years ago, on a Sabbath afternoon, we saw a spectacle we shall never forget. It was the broad, bright, smothering sunshine of an August day. Not a speck was visible on the heavens, save one in the far south. Suddenly, as we gaze, that one speck broadens, darkens, opens into black wings, shuts again into a mass of solid gloom, rushes then, like a chariot of darkness, northward over the sky, till, in less time than we have taken to write these words, there is, over all the visible heaven and earth, the wail of wind, the roar of thunder, the pattering of hail, the fall of rain, the flash of lightning, and the rushing of swift waters along the ground. "It is a whirlwind!" we exclaimed, as, like a huge sudden apparition, it seemed to stand up between us and the summer sky. "With God is terrible majesty." From such a car might an angry Deity descend. Out of such a black orchestra might God speak, and all flesh be silent before him.

The speech is worthy of the accompaniments and of the speaker. It is a series of questions following each other like claps of thunder. Have our readers never fancied, during a thunder-storm, that each new peal was an ironical question, proposed to the conscience from the cloud, and succeeded by a pause of silence more satirical still? Thus, God from his heaven, while pointing to his gallery of works, rising in climax to leviathan, laughs at the baffled power and wisdom of man; and terrible is the glory of his snorting nostrils. The "question" in composition is often as searching and stringent as was the "question" of old in law. Abrupt, jagged, unanswered, it

gives an idea of the Infinite, such as is given by a bust, or the broken limb of a statue. The slight tinge of contempt which mingles with it adds a strange flavor to its interest; and, when repeated, it sounds like the voice of a warrior, shouting triumphantly in the ear of his dead, unreplying foeman. So have the masters of writing used it. Demosthenes abounds in what Hall calls those terrible interrogations, by which, after prostrating his opponents in argument, he proceeds to trample them in the mire—reserving them, however, wisely, for the close of his orations. Barrow pursues some of his longest and finest trains of reasoning in this form. But the great modern master of this impressive inversion of truth is Foster, who never fails, in his "Essays," thus to cite the conscience or the soul to his bar, and cross-examine it amid such silence as the judgment-seat may witness, when a Mary, Queen of Scots, is summoned to put in her plea. In Job, the questions of God form the climax of the poem. You feel that they reach the highest possible point of sublimity; and the pause which follows is profound as the stillness of the grave. The voice even of poetic melody, immediately succeeding, had seemed impertinent and feeble. The cry of penitence and humility, "Behold, I am vile," is alone fit to follow such a burst, and to cleave such a silence.

To put suitable language into the mouth of Deity, has generally tasked to straining, or crushed to feebleness, the genius of poets. Homer, indeed, at times, nobly ventriloquizes from the top of Olympus; but it is ventriloquism—the voice of a man, not of a God—Homer's thunder, not Jove's. Milton, while impersonating God, falls flat; he peeps and mutters from the dust; he shrinks from seeking to fill up the compass of the Eternal's voice. Adequately to represent God speaking, required not only the highest inspiration, but that the poet had heard, or thought he had heard, his very voice shaping articulate sounds from midnight torrents, from the voices of the wind, from the chambers of the thunder, from the rush of the whirlwind, from the hush of night, and from the breeze of the day. And, doubtless, the author of Job had had this experience. He had lain on

his bed at night, while his tent was shaking with what seemed the deep syllables of Jehovah's voice. He had heard God in the waters, unchained by midnight silence, and speaking to the stars. In other nameless and homeless sounds of the wilderness, he had fancied distinct words of counsel or of warning; and when he came to frame a speech for God, did he not tune it to the rhythm of those well-remembered accents; and on these, as on wings, did not his soul soar upward into the highest heaven of song? Some poems have risen to the note of the flute, and others to the swell of the organ; but this highest reach of poetry rose to the music of the mightiest and oldest elements of nature combining to form the various parts in the one voice of God. And how this whirlwind of poetry, once aroused, storms along—how it ruffles the foundations of the earth—how it churns up the ocean into spray—how it unvails the old treasures of the hail and the snow—how it soars up to the stars—how the "lightnings say to it, Here we are"—how, stooping from this pitch, it sweeps over the curious, noble, or terrible creatures of the bard's country, rousing the mane of the lion, stirring the still horror of the raven's wing, racing with the wild ass into the wilderness, flying with the eagle and the hawk, shortening speed over the lazy vastness of behemoth, awakening the thunder of the horse's neck, and daring to "open the doors of the face," with the teeth "terrible round about" of leviathan himself! The truth, the literal exactness, the freshness, fire, and rapidity of the figures presented, resemble less the slow, elaborate work of a painter, than a succession of pictures, taken instantaneously by the finger of the sun, and true to the smallest articulation of the burning life.

The close of the poem, representing Job's renewed prosperity, is in singular contrast with the daring machinery and rich imagery of the rest of the book. It is simple and strange as a nursery tale. By a change as sudden as surprising, the wheel turns completely round. Job rises from the dust; a golden shower descends, in the form of troops of friends, bringing with them silver and gold; sheep and oxen, as if rising from the

earth, fill his folds; new sons and daughters are born to him; the broad tree over his tent blooms and blossoms again; and long, seated under its shadow, may he look ere he descry other messengers arriving breathless to announce the tidings of other woes. In Blake's illustrations of this book, not the least interesting or significant print is that representing the aged patriarch, seated in peace, surrounded by a multitude of singing men and singing women; camels, sheep, and oxen grazing in the distance; and, from above, God (an exact *likeness* of Job) smiling, well-pleased, upon this full-length portrait of the man perfect through suffering—the reconciled man.

Perhaps, when Blake himself expired, the true and only key to his marvelous book of Illustrations (less a commentary on Job, than a fine though inferior variation of it) was lost. It were vain to recount the innumerable interpretations of the poem given by more prosaic minds than Blake's. Our notion has been already indicated. We think Job a dramatic and allegorical representation of the necessity, means, and consequences of the reconciliation of man the individual, shadowing out, in dim distance, the reconciliation of man the race *on earth*, but not, alas! (as Blake seems to have intended) the reconciliation of man the *entire* species in heaven. The great problem of this world is, How is man to be reconciled, or made *at one*, with his Maker? He appears, as David describes himself, a "stranger on this earth." All elements, and almost all beings, are at war with him. He has nothing friendly at first, save the warmth of his mother's breast. Rain, cold, snow, even sunshine, beasts, and men, seem and are stern and harsh to his infant feelings and frame. As he advances, his companions, his schoolmasters, are, or appear to be, renewed forms of enmity. "What have I done to provoke such universal alienation?" is often his silent, suppressed feeling. The truths of art, science, nay, of God's word, are presented as if contradicting his first fresh feelings. Books, catechisms, schools, churches, he steals into, as if they were strange and foreign countries. At every step, he breathes a difficult air. Sustained, indeed, by the buoyant

spirits of youth, he contrives to be cheerful amid his difficulties; but at last the "Death-in-life" appears in his path—the dreadful question arises, "Must there not be something *in me* to provoke all this enmity? Were *I* a different being, would to me every step seem a stumble, every flower a weed, every brow a frown, every path an inclosure, every bright day a gaud, every dark day a faithful reflector of misery every hope a fear, and every fear the mask for some unknown and direr horror? If it is not the universe, but I, that am dark, whence comes in me the shadow which so beclouds it? Whence comes it, that I do not partake either of its active happiness, or of its passive peace? And seeing that the universe is unreconciled to me, and I to the universe, must it not be the same with its God, and who or what is to bridge across the gulf betwixt him and me? If a finite creation repels me, how can I face the justice of an infinite God? If time present me with little else than difficulties, what dangers and terrors may lurk in the heights and depths of eternity? If often the wicked are prosperous and contented on earth, and the good afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, may not similar anomalies abound hereafter? And how am I to be convinced that a system so strange as that around me is wise—that sufferings are salutary, and that its God is good? And how, above all, is my personal unworthiness to be removed?

Such is a general statement of the common difficulty. In various men it assumes various forms. In one man, a gloomy temperament so poisons all the avenues of his being, that to tell him to be happy and to worship, sounds at first as absurd as though you were giving the same counsel to one burning in a conflagration. Another is so spell-bound by the spectacle of moral evil, that he is able to do or say little else than ask the question—"*Whence* and *what* art thou, execrable shape?" A third, sincere almost to lunacy, is driven doubly "mad for the sight of his eyes which he doth see"—the sight of a world, as hollow in heart as some think it to be in physical structure. A fourth has his peace strangled by doubts as to the peculiar doc-

trines, or as to the evidences of his faith—doubts of a kind which go not out even by prayer and fasting. And a fifth, of pure life and benevolent disposition, becomes a mere target for the arrows of misfortune—at once a prodigy of excellence and a proverb of woe.

This last case is that of Job, and, perhaps, of those now enumerated, the only one then very likely. But the resolution of the difficulty he obtained applies to all the others unreconciled—it *ought* to satisfy them. How was Job instructed? By being taught—first, in part through suffering, and, secondly, through a manifestation of God's superiority to him—a child-like trust in God. Even amid his wailings of woe, he had falteringly expressed this feeling—"Though he slay me, I will trust in him." But when he saw and felt God's greatness, as expounded by himself, he reasoned thus: One so great must be good—one so wise must mean me well by all my afflictions. I will distrust and doubt him no more. I will loathe myself on account of my imperfect and unworthy views of him. I will henceforth confide in the great whole. I will fearlessly commit my bark to the eternal ocean, and, come fair weather or foul, will believe that the wave which dashes, or the wave which drowns, or the wave which wafts to safety, is equally *good*. I will also repent, in dust and ashes, of my own vileness, and trust to forgiveness through the medium of the Great Sacrifice, which the smoke of my altar feebly symbolizes.

Behold in this the outline of our reconciliation. The Creator of this great universe must be good. Books of evidences, begone! One sunset, one moonlight hour, one solemn meditation of the night, one conversation at evening with a kindred heart, is worth you all! Such scenes, such moments, dissolve the most massive doubts easily and speedily as the evening air sucks down the mimic mountains of vapor which lie along the verge of heaven. The sense given is but that, indeed, of beauty and power—transcendent beauty, and power illimitable; but is there not insinuated something more—a lesson of love as transcendent, and of peace as boundless? Does not the blue sky

give us an unutterable sense of security and of union, as it folds around us, like the curtain of a tent? Do not the stars dart down glances of warm intelligence and affection, secret and real as the looks of lovers? Do not tears, torments, evils, and death, seem at times to melt and disappear in that gush of golden glory, in that stream of starry hope which the milky-way pours each night through the heavens? Say not with Carlyle, "It is a sad sight." Sad! the sight of beauty, splendor, order, motion, progress, power, Godhead—how can it be sad? Man, indeed, must at present weep as well as wonder, as he looks above. Be it so. We have seen a child weeping bitterly on his mother's knee, while the train was carrying him triumphantly on. "Poor child!" we thought, "why weepest thou? Thy mother's arms are around thee, thy mother's eye is fixed upon thee, and that bustle and rapidity, so strange and dreadful to thee, are but carrying thee faster to thy home." Thus man wails and cries, with God above, God around, God below, and God before him. Not always shall he thus weep. But other elements are still wanting in his reconciliation. It is not necessary merely that power, beauty, and wisdom lead to the conception of God's goodness and love, but that suffering, by perfecting patience, by teaching knowledge, should, while humbling man's pride, elevate his position, and put into his hands the most powerful of all telescopes—that of a tear. "Perfect through suffering" must man become; and, then, how do all apparent enemies soften into friends! how drop down all disguises; and misfortunes, losses, fevers, falls, deaths, stand out naked, detected, and blushing lovers.

One thing more, and the atonement is complete. Man has about him another burden besides that of misery—it is a burden of sin. To this he can not be reconciled. This must be taken away ere he can be perfectly at one with the universe or its Maker. This, by the great sacrifice at Calvary, and the sanctifying power of the Spirit, has been taken away; and now, whoever, convinced of God's benevolence by the voice of his own soul echoing the language of the creation—satisfied,

from experience, of the benefits of suffering—is also forgiven, through Christ, his iniquities, stands forth to view the reconciled man. Be he of dark disposition, his gloom is now tempered, if not removed; he looks at it as the pardoned captive at his iron bars the last evening of his imprisonment. Be he profoundly fascinated by moral evil, even with its dark countenance, a certain morning twilight begins to mingle. Has he been sick of the hollowness of the world, now he feels that that very hollowness secures its explosion—it must give place to a truer system. Has he entertained doubts—he drowns them in atoning blood. Has he suffered—his sufferings have left on the soil of his mind a rich deposit, whence are ready to spring the blossoms of Eden, and to shine the colors of heaven. Thus reconciled, how high his attitude, how dignified his bearing! He knows not what it is to fear. Having become the friend of God, he can look above and around him with the eye of universal friendship. In the blue sky he dwells, as in a warm nest. The clouds and mountains seem ranged around him, like the chariots and horses of fire about the ancient prophet. The roar of wickedness itself, from the twilight city, is attuned into a melody, the hoarse beginning of a future anthem. Flowers bloom on every dunghill—light gushes from every gloom—the grave itself smiles up in his face—and his own frame, even if decaying, is the loosened and trembling leash which, when broken, shall let his spirit spring forth, free and exulting, amid the liberties, the light, the splendors, and the "powers of the world to come." *

* The author means, if God spare him, to develop further his views of the reconciliation of man, in another, and probably a fictitious form.

CHAPTER VI.

POETRY OF THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

The entire history of Israel is poetical and romantic. Besides the leading and wide events we have already indicated, as nourishing the spirit of Hebrew poetry—such as the creation, the flood, the scene at Sinai—there were numerous minor sources of poetic influence. The death of Moses in the sight of the promised land; the crossing of the river Jordan; the wars of Canaan; the romantic feats of Samson; the immolation of Jephtha's daughter, the Iphigenia of Israel; the story of Ruth, "standing amid the alien corn," with all its simplicity and pathos; the rise of David, harp in hand, from "the ewes with young," to the throne of his country; his adventurous, checkered, and most poetical history; the erection of the temple, that fair poem of God's; the separation of the tribes; the history and ascent of Elijah; the calling of Elisha from the plow; the downfall of the temple; the captivity of Babylon; the return from it; the rise of the new temple, amid the tears of the old men, who had seen the glories of the former—these, and many others, were events which, touching again and again, at short and frequent intervals, the rock of the Hebrew heart, brought out another and another gush of poetry.

We speak not now of David's Psalms, or those which followed his time, but of those songs which are sprinkled through the historical works of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel (inclusive of one or two of David's strains), and which shine as sparkles struck off from the rolling wheel of Jewish story. It is beau

tiful to see history thus flowering into poetry—the heroic deed living in the heroic lay—the glory of the field, separated from its gore, purified, and, like the ever-burning fire of the temple, set before the Lord of Hosts. What Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome" have done for the fabulous legends and half-true traditions of ancient story, have Jasher, Iddo, Deborah, and David, in a higher and holier manner, done for the real battles and miracles which stud the annals of God's chosen people.

Need we refer to the grand myth—if such it be—of the standing still of the sun over Gibeon, and of the moon over the valley of Ajalon. Supposing this literally true, what a picture of the power of mind over matter—of inspired mind over passive matter! The one word of the believing man has arrested the course of nature. His stern commanding eye has enlisted the very sun into his service, and the moon seems a device upon his banner. It is a striking verification of the words, "All things are possible to him that believeth." That matter which yields reluctantly to the generalizations of science, is plastic, as soft clay, in the hands of faith. Suns and systems dance to the music of the throbs from a great heart. Should we, on the contrary, suppose this a poetical parable, and thus rid ourselves of the physical difficulties, how grandly does it express modern experiences! Has not man, through astronomy, made the sun stand still, and the earth revolve? Did not the genius of Napoleon arrest the sun of Austerlitz, for many a summer, over his fields of slain? Is not each extension of the power of the telescope, causing firmaments to yield, to recede, to draw near, to dissolve, to curdle, to stand, to move, to assume ten thousand various forms, colors, and dimensions? Is not man each year feeling himself more at home in his house, more at liberty to range through its remoter apartments, with more command over its elements, and with a growing consciousness, that his empire shall yet be complete? Joshua commanding the sun and the moon, is but an emblem of the man of the future, turning and winding the universe, like a "fiery Pegasus," below him, on his upward and forward career.

Deborah—what a strong solitary ray of light strikes from her story and song, upon the peaks of the past! A mother in Israel, the wise woman of her neighborhood, curing diseases, deciding differences, perhaps, at times, conducting the devotions of her people—how little was she, or were they, aware of the depth which lay in her heart and in her genius. It required but one action and one strain to cover her with glory. In her, as in all true women, lay a quiet fund of strength, virtue, and courage, totally unsuspected by herself. While others wondered at her sudden patriotism and poetry, she wondered more than they. The Great Spirit, seeking for a vent through which to pour a flood of ruin upon the invaders of Israel, found this woman sitting under her palm-tree, on the mountain side, and she started up at his bidding. "I, Deborah, arose." The calm matron becomes the Nemesis of her race, the mantle of Miriam falls on her shoulders, and the sword of Joshua flames from her hand. This prophetic fury sinks not, till the enemy of her country is crushed, and till she has told the tidings to earth, to heaven, and to all after-time. And then, like a sword dropped from a hero's side, she quietly falls back into her peaceful solitude again. It is Cincinnatus resuming his plow-handle in mid-furrow. How wonderful are those gusts which surprise and uplift men, and women too, into greatness—a greatness before unknown, and terrible even to themselves.

In her song the poetry of war comes to its culmination. Not the hoofs of many horses, running to battle, produce such a martial music, as do her prancing words. How she rolls the fine vesture of her song in blood! How she dares to liken her doings to the thunder-shod steps of the God of Sinai! The song begins with God, and with God it ends. One glance—no more—is given to the desolations which preceded her rising. Praises, like sunbeams, are made to fall on the crests of those who periled themselves with her, in the high places of the field. Questions of forked lightning are flung at the recreant tribes. "Why did Dan abide in ships?" Ah! Dan was a serpent in the way, biting the horse-heels, and causing the rider

to fall backward ; but here he is stung and stumbled himself! Over one village, Meroz, she pauses to pour the concentration of her ire, and the "curse causeless doth not come." For the brave, the light of Goshen ; for the recreants, the night of Egypt ; but for the neutral, the gloom of Gehenna ! "All power," then, "is given her," to paint the battle itself ; and it, and all its scenery, from the stars above fighting against Sisera, to the river Kishon below, that "ancient river," rolling away in indignation the last relics of the enemy, appear before us. Then her imagination pursues the solitary Sisera, unhelmed, pale, and panting, to the tent of Heber, and with a yet firmer nerve, and a yet holier hypocrisy, she re-enacts the part of Jael, and slays again her slain. And then, half in triumph, and half in the tenderness which often mingles with it, she sees the mother of Sisera looking out at her window, with the flush of hope on her cheek fading into the deathlike paleness of a mother's disappointment and a mother's anguish ; and then—for Deborah, too, is a "mother in Israel"—she can no more, she shuts the scene, she drops the lattice, and her voice falters, though her faith is firm, as she exclaims, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord ; but let them that love him be as the sun, when he goeth forth in his might."

It is a baptized sword which Deborah bears. It is a battle of the Lord which she fights. It is a defensive warfare that her song hallows. "Carnage," says Wordsworth, "is God's daughter." We reverenced and loved the Poet of the Lakes, whose genius was an honor to his species, and whose life was an honor to his genius ; but seldom has a poet written words more mischievous, untrue, and (unintentionally) blasphemous, than these. We all remember Byron's inference from it, "If Carnage be God's daughter, she must be Christ's sister." Blasphemous ! but the blasphemy is Wordsworth's, not Byron's. Here the skeptic becomes the Christian, and the Christian the blasphemer. If Carnage be God's daughter, so must evil and sin be. No, blessed be the name of our God ! He does not smile above the ruin of smoking towns ; he does not snuff up

the blood of a Borodino, or a Waterloo, as a dark incense, he does not say, over a shell-split fortress, or over the dying decks of a hundred dismasted vessels, drifting down the trembling water on the eve of a day of carnage, "It is very good;" he is the Prince of Peace, and his reign, when universal, shall be the reign of universal brotherhood. And yet, we will grant to Carnage a *royal* origin: she is, if not the daughter of our God, yet of a god, of the *god of this world.* But shame to those who would lay down the bloody burden at the door of the house of the God of Mercy—a door which has opened to many an orphan and many a foundling, but which will not admit this forlorn child of hell.

Never did genius more degrade herself than when gilding the fields and consecrating the banners of unjust or equivocal war. Here, the gift of Scott himself resembles an eagle's feather, transferred from the free wing of the royal bird to the cap of some brutal chieftain. The sun and the stars *must* lend their light to the worst atrocities of the battle-field, but surely genius is not bound by the same compulsion. De Quincey has lately predicted the immortality of war: we answer him in the language of a book, the authority of which he acknowledges, *Neither shall they learn war any more.*

Between the time of Deborah and David, we find little express poetry. One fable there is, that of Jotham—"the Trees choosing a king"—besides the all-beautiful book of Ruth.

The *first* fable, as the first disguise assumed by Truth, must be interesting. Since Jotham uttered the fierce moral of his parable, and fled for his life, in what a number of shapes has Truth sought for refuge, safety, decoration, point, or power! Hid by him in trees, she has afterward lurked in flowers, spoken in animals, surged in waves, soared in clouds, burned over the nations in suns and stars, ventriloquized from mines below and from mountains above, created other worlds for her escape, and, when hunted back to the family of mankind, has made a thousand new variations of the human species, as disguises for her shy and tremulous self! Whence this strange evasiveness? It

is partly because Truth, like all her true friends, loves to unbend and disport herself at times; because Truth herself is but a child, and has not yet put away all childish things; because Truth is a beauty, and loves, as the beautiful do, to look at and show herself in a multitude of mirrors; because Truth is a lover of nature, and of all lovely things; because Truth, who can only stammer in the language of abstractions, can speak in the language of forms; because Truth is a fugitive, and in danger, and must hide in many a bosky borne and many a shady arbor; because Truth, in her turn, is dangerous, and must not show herself entire, else the first look were the last; and because Truth would beckon us on, by her very bashfulness, to follow after her, to her own land, where she may still continue to hide in heaven, as she has hid in earth—but amid forests, and behind shades of scenery so colossal, that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive thereof.

And seldom (to look a little back in the narrative) did Truth assume a quainter disguise, than when she spoke from the lips of Balaam, the son of Beor. Inclined as we are, with Herder, to assign to his prophecies a somewhat later date than is usually supposed, we do not for that reason deny their authenticity or genuineness. They bring before us the image of the first godless poet—the first who "profaned the God-given strength, and marred the lofty line." Having been, perhaps, at first a true prophet, and a genius, he had become a soothsayer, but was surprised and forced into a true prophet again. His words come forth from his lips, like honey from the carcass of the lion —"meat from the eater." We figure him always with gray hair and a Danton visage; the brow lofty and broad; the eye small, leering, fierce; the lips large and protruding. Poetry has often lighted on a point so tempting as that rock-like brow; licentiousness has blanched his hair, and many sins and abominations are expressed in his lower face. But look how the Spirit of the Lord now covers him with an unusual and mighty afflatus—how he struggles against it as against a shirt of poison, but in vain —how his eye at length steadies sullenly into vision—and how

his lips, after writhing, as though scorched, open their wide and slow portals to utter the blessing. He feels himself—eye, brow, soul, all but heart—caught in the power of a mighty one; and he must speak or burn! As it is, the blessing blisters his tongue, like a curse, and he has found only its utterance a milder misery.

Beautiful, notwithstanding Balaam, is the scene in Numbers. It is the top of Pisgah, where the feet of Moses are soon to stand in death. But now seven altars are sending up the crackling smoke of their burnt-offerings—the fat of bullocks and rams has been transmuted into a rich and far-seen flame—Balak and the Princes of Moab surround the sacrifices, and gaze anxiously upon the troubled face of the seer; while around stand up, grim and silent, as if waiting the result, Mounts Nebo and Peor; behind stretches the Land of Promise, from the Dead Sea to the Lebanon; and before are the white tents, the Tabernacle, and the bright cloud, suspended, vail-like and vast, over the camp of Israel. "'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life one glance of that array." The soul of Balaam, the poet, rises to his lips, but would linger long there, or come forth only in the fury of curse, did not the whisper of God at the same moment touch his spirit; and how his genius springs to that spur. To his excited imagination, the bright finger of the cloud over the camp seems the horn of a "unicorn;" the camp itself, couching in the valley, is a "great lion," waiting to rear himself, to drink the blood of the slain; no "divination" can move that finger pointing to Canaan and to Moab; no "enchantment" can chain that "Lion of the tribe of Judah." It is over—he drops his rod of imprecation, and to the crest-fallen Princes exclaims—"*God hath blessed, and I can not reverse it.*"

From point to point he is taken, but, even as his ass was waylaid at every step by the angel, so is his evil genius met and rebuked under a better spirit, till each mount in all that high range becomes a separate source of blessing to the "people dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations." Trembling in the memory and the remaining force of the vision, the

prophet at length pursues eastward his solitary journey, and, trembling in the terror of Israel, Balak also goes his way.

Genius has indeed a hard task to perform when she turns, or seeks to turn, against God. In proportion to the resemblance she bears him, is the misery of the rebellion. It is not the clay rising against the potter—it is the sunbeam against the sun. But here, too, we find righteous compensation. Sometimes the parricidal power is palsied in the blow. Thus, Paine found the strong right hand, which in the "Rights of Man" had coped with Burke, shivered, when, in the "Age of Reason," it touched the ark of the Lord. Sometimes, with the blasphemy of the strain, there is blended a wild beauty, or else a mournful discontent, which serves to carry off or to neutralize the evil effect. Shelley, for instance, has made few converts: a system which kept him so miserable can not make others happy or hopeful—and you cry besides, that very beauty and love of which he raves are vague abstractions, till condensed into a *form*. Others, again, lapped generally in the enjoyment or dream of a sensual paradise, which is often disturbed by the feeling or the fear of a sensuous hell, sometimes through their dream chant fragments of psalms, snatches of holy melodies learned in childhood; or, awakening outright, feel a power over them compelling them to utter the truth of heaven in strains which had too often fanned by turn every evil passion of earth; and, behold, a Burns and Byron, as well as a Saul and a Balaam, are among the prophets. Does their genius thus exercised seem strange as a parable in the mouth of fools? How stranger far to superior beings must be the spectacle of *any* species of genius revolting against its own higher nature in revolting against its God!

Let then Balaam, the son of Beor, pass on toward the mountains of the East. We follow him with mingled emotions of disgust and admiration, fear and pity—pity, for the sword is already trembling over his head; he who conspired not with Moab shall soon conspire with Midian, and shall perish in the attempt. It is but one lucid peak in his history that we see—

all behind and before is darkness; nor can we expect for him even the tremendous *blessing*—"*Therefore eternal silence be his doom.*"

In the First Book of Samuel, we find at least three specimens of distinct poetry—the ode or thanksgiving, the satire, and the ghost scene. The first is the song of Hannah. This is interesting, principally, as the finest utterance of the general desire for children which existed in Jewish females, and which exists in females still. We deduce from this not merely the inference that the Jews expected a Messiah, but also that there is in human hearts a yearning after a nobler shape of humanity, and that this yearning is itself a proof of its prophecy, and of the permanence and progressive advancement of that race which, notwithstanding ages of anguish and disappointment, continues to thirst for and to expect its own apotheosis.

And are not all after-satire and invective against monarchy and kings condensed in Samuel's picture of the approaching "King Stork" of Israel? We quote it entire:—"And this will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectioneries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your *goodliest young men, and your asses*, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep; and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." What a quiet, refreshing vein of sarcasm enlivens the

stern truth of this passage. Sheep and asses are the last and least victims to the royal vulture—men and women are his favorite quarry.

Ere coming to the Cave of Endor, we must glance at the actors in the celebrated scene.

The first is Samuel, who had been brought up in Hannah's hand to the Temple service—who had, with his curling locks and "little coat," eagerly officiated as a young priest there—who had been awakened at midnight by the voice of God—through whose little throat came accents of divine wrath which stunned Eli's heart, and made the flesh-hooks of his sons tremble amid their sacrilege—who stood behind the smoke of the sacrifice of a sucking lamb, with his hands uplifted to heaven, while behind were his cowering countrymen; before, the army of the Philistines; and above, a blue sky, which gradually darkened into tempest, thunder, dismay, and destruction to the invaders—who anointed Saul—who hewed Agag in pieces—who entered amazed Bethlehem like a God, and, neglecting the tall sons of Jesse, chose David, the fair-haired and blooming child of genius—who again, at Gilgal, summoned the lightnings, which said to him, "Here we are"—and who, at last, was buried in Ramah, his own city, with but one mourner—all Israel, which "rose and buried him." Son of the barren woman, consecrated to God from thy birth, "king of kings," lord of thunders, how can even the strong grave secure thee? Nay, ere it fully can, thou must look up from below once more to perform another act of king-quelling power.

The second actor in the scene is Saul, whose character is more complex in its elements. Indolent, yet capable of great exertion; selfish, yet with sparks of generosity; fitful in temper, vindictive in disposition, confusedly brave, irregularly liberal, melancholy—mad, without genius, possessed of strong attachments, stronger hatreds and jealousies, neither a tyrant nor a good prince, neither thoroughly bad nor good, whom you neither can "bless nor ban," he is one of the nondescripts of history. He reminds us most of the gloomy tyrant of Scotland

—Macbeth. Like him, he has risen from a lower station; like him, he has cemented his tottering throne by blood; like him, he is possessed by an evil spirit, though, in Saul's case, it does not take the form of a wife-fiend; like him, too, he is desperate—the Philistines are upon him—David is at a distance—Samuel sleeps in Ramah—God has refused to answer him by prophets, or Urim, or dreams; and he must now, like Macbeth in his extremity, go and knock at the door of hell.

The third actor is the witch of Endor. A borderer between earth and hell, her qualities are rather those of the former than of the latter. She has little weird or haggard grandeur. So far as we can apprehend her, she was a vulgar conjurer, herself taken by surprise, and caught in her own snare. She owns (if we may compare a fictitious with a real person) little kindred to the witches of "Macbeth," with their faces faded and their raiment withered in the infernal fire; their *supernatural age* and ugliness; the wild mirth which mingles with their malice; the light, dancing measure to which their strains are set, and which adds greatly to their horror, as though a sentence of death were given forth in doggerel; the odd gusto with which they handle and enumerate all unclean and abominable things; the strange sympathy with which they may almost be said to *fancy* their victims; their dream-like conveyance; the new and complete mythology with which they are allied; and the uncertainty in which you are left as to their nature, origin, and history;—nor to those of Scott and Burns, who are just malicious old Scotch hags, corrupted into witches.

Such are the actors. How striking the scene! We must figure for ourselves the witch's place of abode. The shadows of night are resting on Mount Tabor. Four miles south of it, lies, near Endor, a ravine deep sunk and wooded. It is a dreary and deserted spot, hedged round by a circle of evil rumors, through which nothing but despair dare penetrate. But there a torrent wails to the moon, and the moon smiles lovingly to the torrent; and thick jungle, starred at times by the eyes of fierce animals, conceals this wild amour; and there stands the hut of the hag,

near which you descry a shed for cattle, which have been, or have been bought by, the wages of her imposture. A knock is heard at her door; and, starting instantly from the thin sleep of guilt, she opens it, after arousing her accomplices. Three men, disguised, but not so deeply as to disguise from her experienced eye the features of lurid fear and ferocity, ask to be, and are, admitted. One, taller, by the head and shoulders, than the rest, opens, in gloomy tones, the gloomy interview, and asks her to bring up whom he should name. Not suspecting this to be Saul—and yet, to whom else could belong that towering stature, that martial form, and the high yet hurried accents of that king-like misery?—she reminds him that Saul had cut off all that had familiar spirits from the land, and that this might be a snare set for her life. Stung, it may be, at this allusion to one of his few good deeds, in hot and hasty terms, he swears to secure her safety. The woman, satisfied, asks whom she is to invoke, trusting, probably, to sleight-of-hand, on her part or her accomplices', to deceive the stranger. He cries aloud for Samuel—the once hated, the now greatly desired, even in his shroud—and while he is yet speaking, his prayer is answered. Samuel, upraising himself through the ground, is seen by the woman. Horrified at the unexpected sight, and discovering, at the same moment, the identity of Saul, she bursts into wild shrieks—"Thou art Saul!" Slowly shaping into distinct form, and curdling into prophetic costume, from the first vague and indefinite shade, appears an "old man covered with a mantle." It is "Samuel even himself." The grave has yielded to the whisper of Omnipotence, and to the cry of despair. Fixing his eye upon the cowering and bending Saul, he asks the reason of this summons. Saul owns his extremity; and then the ghost, slow disappearing, as he had slowly risen, seems to melt down into those awful accents, which fall upon Saul's ear as "blood mingled with fire," and which leave him a mere molten residuum of their power upon the ground—"To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me"—shadows in a world where the "light is as darkness." "Then fell Saul

along the earth"—a giant chilled and prostrated by a vapor. And how similar the comfort offered through the witch of Endor to the fallen monarch of Israel to the dance of Macbeth's infernal comforters? Shakspeare must have had Endor in his eye:

> "Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprights,
> And show the best of our delights;
> I'll charm the air to give a sound,
> While you perform your antique round;
> That this great king may kindly say,
> Our duties did his welcome pay."

To this dance, performed to cheer the cheerless, we may liken the *calf*, killed in haste, and in haste eaten, by one who shall never partake another meal. But here Macbeth rises above his prototype. He drinks the "wildflower wine" of destiny—goes forth enlarged by the draught—and at last dies in broad battle, with his harness on his back; whereas, Saul perishes on the morrow, by his own hand.

And who was his chief mourner? Who sung his threnody—a threnody the noblest ever sung by poet over king? It was a laureate whom his death had elected to the office—it was David. His "Song of the Bow"—which he taught to Israel, till it became such a household word of national sorrow as the "Flowers of the Forest" among ourselves—is one of the shortest as well as sweetest of lyrics. It is but one gasp of genius, and yet remains musical in the world's ear to this hour. It is difficult, by a single stroke upon the great heart of man, to produce a sound which shall reverberate till it mingle with the last trump; and yet, this did David in Ziklag. On a wild torn leaf floating past him, he recorded his anguish; and that leaf, as if all the dew denied to the hills of Gilboa had rested on it, is still fresh with immortality. "How are the mighty fallen;" "tell it not in Gath;" "they were lovely in their lives, and in their death not divided;" "thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women"—these touches of nature, and accents of music, have come down to us entire, as if all the elements had conspired

that such sounds should never perish. A lesson to all who write or speak! Speak from the *inmost heart*, and your word, though as little, is as safe, as Moses in his ark of bulrushes. Unseen hands are stretched forth from all sides to receive and to guard it. It becomes a part of the indestructible essence of things. The poet's name may perish; or, though it remain, may represent no intelligible character; but the "Flowers of the Forest" and "Donocht-head" must be sung and wept over while the earth endureth. Grasp, though it were with your finger, the horns of nature's altar, and you shall never be torn away. Let the world be ever so hurried in her transition from age to age, she never can forget to carry her least household gods along with her.

The picture in this "Bow Song" is perfect in its simplicity. On the high places of their last field stand Saul and Jonathan, soon to be twins in death. Swifter are they than eagles, and stronger than lions. Beautiful are their feet upon the mountains. Courage gleams in the eyes of both; but in Saul it is the courage of despair. The scene of Endor still swims before his view, and the mantle of Samuel darkens the day. The battle is joined. The Philistines press his army sore. Jonathan is slain before his eyes. Young, strong, and beautiful, he yields to a stronger than he. Saul himself is wounded by the archers. The giant totters toward the ground, which is already wet with his blood. Feeling his fate inevitable, he asks his armor-bearer to save, by slaying him, from the hands of the uncircumcised. He refuses—the unfortunate throws himself on his own sword, and you hear him crying with his final breath—"Not the Philistines, but thou, unquiet spirit of Ramah, hast overcome me." From the hills of Gilboa, the imagination of David leaps to Gath, and hears the shout with which the tidings of the king's death are received there. But there mingles with it, in his ear, a softer, yet more painful sound. It is the wail of Israel's women, almost forgetting their individual losses in that of Saul, their stately monarch, and Jonathan, his ingenuous son. And how do years of ordinary sorrow seem

collected in the words which had long struggled obscurely in David's bosom, and often trembled on his lips, but never been expressed till now, when, in the valley of the shadow of death, friendship became a name too feeble for his feelings—"My *brother* Jonathan!" If death dissolves dear relationships, it also creates others dearer still. Then, possibly, for the first time, the brother becomes a friend; but then also the friend is often felt to be more than a brother.

But we may not tarry longer on these dark and dewless hills. We pass to that hold in the wilderness, which David has not yet, but is soon to quit, for a capital and a throne. A sentence makes that hold visible, as if set in fire:—"And of the Gadites, there separated themselves unto David into the hold in the wilderness, men of might, and men of war for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains." "There is," says Aird, "an Iliad of heroes in these simple words. Suppose David had his harp in his hand, in the hold, and worshiped with his warriors the God of Israel (in light introduced from the top of the cave), what a picture for Salvator or Rembrandt; or, rather, the whole effect is beyond the reach of the pictorial art. The visages and shapes, majestic in light and shadow, in that rock-ribbed den, could be given on the canvas, but nothing save the plastic power of poetry could lighten the darkly-congregated and proscribed cave, with the sweet contrasted relief of the wild roes without, unbeleaguered and free, on the green range of the unmolested hills. The verse is a perfect poem."

The mulberry-trees next arise before us, surmounting the valley of Rephaim. In themselves, there is little poetry. But on their summits you now hear a sound, the sound of "a going"—mysterious, for not a breath of wind is in the sky; it is the "going" of invisible footsteps, sounding a signal from God to David to press his enemies hard. We have often realized the image, as we listened to the wind, of innumerable tiny footsteps treading upon the leaves, their minute, incessant,

measured, yet rapid dance. It seemed at once music and dancing; and, had it ceased in an instant, would have reminded you of the sudden silence of a ball-room, which a flash of lightning had entered. It struck the soul of Burns, who, perhaps, heard in it the sound of spirits sullenly bending to overwhelming destiny, and found it reflective of his own history. But in the scene at Rephaim, it appeared as if armies were moving along the high tops of the trees; as, in "Macbeth," the wood began to move. Nature, from her high green places, seemed making common cause against the invader; and, in the windless waving of the boughs, was heard the cheer of inevitable victory. Would to God, that, in the silence of the present expectation of the Church, a "going," even as of the stately steps of Divine Majesty, were heard above, to re-assure the timid among the Church's friends, and to abash the stout-hearted among her foes.

From the thick of poetical passages and events in the other parts of Jewish history, we select a few—the fewer, that the mountains of prophecy which command at every point the history remain to be scaled. We find in Nathan's parable "a lamb for a burnt-offering," the simplest of stories, producing the most tremendous of heart-quakes. No four words in any language are simpler, and none stronger, than the words, "Thou art the Man." What effect one quiet sentence can produce! The whispers of the gods, how strong and thrilling! Nathan, that gentle prophet, becomes surrounded with the grandeur of an apparition, and his words fall like the slow, heavy drops of a thunder-shower. The princely, gallant, and gifted king quails before him; and how can you recognize the author of the 18th Psalm, with its fervid and resistless rush of words and images, like coals of fire, in that poor prostrate worm, groveling on the ground, and afraid of the eyes of his own servants?

The genius of David remains for the analysis of the next chapter. But we must not omit the darkest and most poetic hour in all his history, when he cast himself into the hands of God rather than of men; and, when under the fiery sword and

the menacing angel, we can conceive admiration for the magnificence of the spectacle, contending with terror—his cheek pale, but his eye burning—the king in panic—the poet in transport, and grasping instinctively for a harp he had not to express his high-strung emotions. Lightning pausing ere it strikes—the poison of Pestilence, hung over the "high-viced city" in the ick air—Death, in the fine fiction of Le Sage, coming up to the morning Madrid—must yield to this figure leaning over the devoted city of God, while both earth and heaven seem waiting to hear the blow which shall break a silence too painful and profound.

Besides Solomon's Proverbs and Poems, there are in his life certain incidents instinct with imagination. The choice of Hercules is a fine apologue, but has not the sublimity or the completeness of the choice of Solomon.

Then there are the sublime circumstances of the dedication of the temple; the pomp of the procession by which the ark was brought up from the City of David to the prouder resting place his son had prepared; the assemblage of all Israel to witness the solemnity; the sacrifice of innumerable sheep and oxen covering the temple and dimming the day with a cloud of fragrance; the slow march of the priests, through the courts and up the stairs of the glorious fabric, till the SANCTUARY was reached; the music, which attended the march, peopling every corner and crevice of the building with its voluminous and searching swell; the moment when the sudden ceasing of the music, in mid-volume, told the people without that the ark was now resting in its "own place;" the louder strain, of cymbals, psalteries, harps, and trumpets, which awoke when the priests returned from the most holy place; the slow coming down, as if in answer to the signal of the music, of the cloud of the glory of God—a cloud of dusky splendor, at once brighter than day and darker than midnight—the very cloud of Sinai, but without its thunders or lightnings; the music quaking into silence, and the priests throwing themselves on the ground, before the "darkness visible" which fills the whole house, lowering over

the foreheads of the bulls of brass, and blackening the waves of the molten sea; and the august instant when Solomon, trembling yet elate, mounts the brazen scaffold, and standing dim-discovered amid a mist of glory, spreads out his hands, and, in the audience of the people, utters that prayer, so worthy of the scene, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens can not contain thee, how much less this house that I have builded?" Surely Solomon here, next to Moses on Sinai, had reached the loftiest *point* ever permitted to mortal man.

But time would fail us even to glance at the numerous remaining poetical incidents, circumstances, and passages in the historical books. We must omit, reluctantly, the visit of the Empress of Sheba to Sultan Solomon—Micaiah's vision of Ramoth-Gilead, and of what was to befall Israel and its king there—the destruction of Sennacherib and his army, in one night, by the angel of the Lord—the great passover of Josiah —and, besides several incidents, already alluded to as occurring in Ezra and Nehemiah, the history of Esther—a history so simple, so full of touches of nature and glimpses into character, so divine, without any mention of the name of God. The most impassioned lover is the secret, who never names his mistress. The ocean is not less a worshiper that she mutters not her Maker's name. The sun is mute in his courts of praise. In Esther, God dwells, as the heart in the human frame—not visible, hardly heard, and yet thrilling and burning in every artery and vein. No label proclaims his presence, but the life of the book has been all derived from Him.

CHAPTER VII.

POETRY OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

We have, in the previous chapter, rather outshot the period of the Psalms; but we must throw out a line, and take up David, ere we sail further.

No character has suffered more than that of David, from all sorts of imperfect appreciation. While some have treated him as a monster of cruelty and lust, classing him with the Neros and Domitians, others have invested him with almost divine immunities, as if we had no more right to ask at him than at God, "What dost thou?"—as if his motions had been irreproachable as those of the wind, and his vengeance inevitable as the thunderbolt. David, in our view of him, was neither a monster nor a deity—neither a bad man nor by any means the highest of Scripture worthies. William Hazlitt has nowhere more disgraced his talents, amid his many offenses, than in a wretched paper in the "Round Table," where he describes David as a crowned spiritual hypocrite, passing from debasing sins to debasing services—debauching Bathsheba, murdering Uriah, and then going to the top of his palace, and singing out his penitence in strains of hollow melody. Paine himself, even in his last putrid state, never uttered a coarser calumny than this. Nor ever did the pure and lofty spirit of Edward Irving look nobler, and speak in higher tones, than when, in his preface to "Horne on the Psalms," he gave a mild, yet stern verdict upon the character of this royal bard—a verdict in which judgment and mercy are both found, but with "mercy rejoicing against judgment." Many years have elapsed since we read that

paper, and, should our views, now to be given, happen, as we hope, to be found to coincide with it, we must still claim them as our own. We remember little more than its tone and spirit.

David was a composite, though not a chaotic, formation. At first, we find him as simple and noble a child of God, nature, and genius, as ever breathed. A shepherd boy, watching now the lambs, and now the stars, his sleep is peradventure haunted by dreams of high enterprise and coming glory, but his days are calm and peaceful as those of the boy in the Valley of Humiliation, who carried the herb "heart's-ease" in his bosom, and sang (next to David's own 23d Psalm) the sweetest of all pastorals, closing with the lines—

> "Here little, and hereafter, bliss
> Is best from age to age."

And yet this boy had done, even ere he went to the camp of Israel, one deed of "derring-do;" he had wet his hands in the blood of a lion and a bear. This had given him a modest sense of his own strength, and perhaps begun to circulate a secret thrill of ambition throughout his veins; and when he obeyed the command of Jesse to repair to his brethren in the host, it might be with a foreboding of triumph, and a smelling of the battle afar off. We can conceive few subjects fitter for picture or poetry, than that of the young David measuring the mass of steel—Goliath—with an eye which mingled in its ray, wonder, eagerness, anger, and

> "That stern joy which warriors feel
> In foemen worthy of their steel."

A hundred battles looked forth in that lingering, longing, insatiate glance. Every one knows the result to the giant of Gath: he fell before the smooth sling-stone. The result on David's mind is not quite so evident; but we think that all the praises and promotion he received, did not materially affect the

simplicity of his habits, or the integrity of his purposes. Nor did, at first, the persecution of Saul much exasperate his spirit, balanced as that was by the love of Jonathan. But his long-continued flight and exile—the insecurity of his life, the converse he had with "wild men and wild usages" in the cave of Adullam and the wilderness of Ziph—although they failed in weaning him from his God, or his Jonathan, or even Saul—did not fail somewhat to embitter his generous nature, and to render him less fitted for bearing the prosperity which suddenly brake upon him. More men are prepared for sudden death than for sudden success. Even after he had reached the throne of his father-in-law, there remained long, obscure contests with the remnant of Saul's party, sudden inroads from the Philistines, and a sullen, dead resistance on the part of the old heathen inhabitants of the land, to annoy his spirit. And when afterward he had brought up the ark of the Lord to the city of David—when the Philistines were bridled, the Syrians smitten, the Ammonites chastised, and their city on the point of being taken—from this very pride of place David fell—fell foully—but fell not forever. From that hour, his life ran on in a current of disaster checkered with splendid successes; it was a tract of irregular and ragged glory, tempering at last into a troubled yet beautiful sunset. But all the elements for our judgment of it had been collected by the time that the "matter of Uriah" was fully transacted.

A noble nature, stung before its sin, and seared before its time, contending between the whirlpool of passion and the strong, still impulses of poetry and faith, ruling all spirits except *his own*, and yet forever seeking to regulate it, too, sincere in *all* things—in sin and in repentance—but sincerest in repentance—often neglecting the special precept, but ever loving the general tenor of the law, unreconciled to his age or circumstances, and yet always striving after such a reconciliation, harassed by early grief, great temptations, terrible trials in advanced life, and views necessarily dim and imperfect—David, nevertheless, retained to the last his heart, his intellect, his sim-

plicity, his devotion—above all, his sincerity—loved his God, saw from afar off his Redeemer; and let the man who is "without sin," among his detractors, cast the first stone. His character is *checkered*, but the stripes outnumber the stains, and the streaks of light outnumber both. In his life, there is no lurking-place—all is plain; the heights are mountains—"the hills of holiness," where a free spirit walks abroad in singing robes; the valleys are depths, out of which you hear the voice of a prostrate penitent pleading for mercy, but nothing is, or can be, concealed, since it is God's face which shows both the lights and shadows of the scene. David, if not the greatest or best of inspired men, was certainly one of the most extraordinary. You must try him not, indeed, by divine or angelic comparison; but if there be any allowance for the aberrations of a tortured, childlike, devout son of genius—if the nobler beasts of the wilderness themselves will obey a law, and observe a chronology, and follow a path of their own, then let the wanderer of Adullam be permitted to enter, or to leave his cave at his own time, and in his own way, seeing that his wanderings were never intended for a map to others, and that those who follow are sure to find that they are aught but ways of pleasantness or of peace to them.

David's genius reflects, of course, partially the phases of his general character. It is a high, bold energy, combining the fire of the warrior and the finer enthusiasm of the lyric poet. This is its general tone, but it undergoes numerous modifications. At one time, it rises into a swell of grandeur, in which the strings of his harp shiver, as if a storm were the harper. Again, it sinks into a deep, solitary plant, like the cry of the bittern in the lonely pool. At a third time, it is a little gush of joy—a mere smile of devout gladness transferred to his strain. Again, it is a quick and earnest cry for deliverance from present danger. Now, his Psalms are fine, general moralizings, and now they involve heart-searching self-examinations; now they are prophecies, and now notes of defiance to his enemies; now pastorals, and now bursts of praise. Ere speaking

of some of them individually, we have a few general remarks to offer :—

First, Few of the Psalms are fancy-pieces, or elaborated from the mind of the poet alone : most are founded upon facts which have newly occurred, whether those facts be distinctly enunciated, or only implied. David is flying from Saul, and he strips off a song, as he might a garment, to expedite his flight, or he is in the hold in the wilderness, and he sings a strain to soothe his anxious soul, or he is overtaken and pressed hard by the Philistines, and he makes musical his cry for safety, or he has fallen into a grievous sin, and his penitence blossoms into poetry, or he is sitting forlorn in Gath, while the idolaters around are deriding or denying the Lord God of Israel, and he murmurs to himself the words : "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," and describes the Lord looking down in anger upon a world lying in wickedness. This, which is common to the Psalms, with much of the other poetry of Scripture, gives an unspeakable freshness, force, and truth to them all. Each flower stands rooted in truth ; the poetry is just *fact on fire*. We have now what is called "occasional poetry," but the *occasions* thus recorded are generally small, such as the sight of the first snow-drop, or the reading of a fine novel in romantic circumstances. But suppose a Wallace or a Bruce, a Mina or a Bolivar, a Wellington or a Napoleon, had been writers, and had let off in verse the spray of their adventures, successes, escapes, and agonies—suppose we had, from their own tongues or pens, Wallace's feelings after Falkirk, or Napoleon's song of Lodi, or his fugitive poetry during the campaign of 1814—these had borne some resemblance to the burning life of David's Psalms.

Secondly, We find in them great variety, extending not only to the Psalms as a whole, but as separate compositions. Many of them begin, for instance, with lamentation, and end with rapture, while others reverse this. In some of the shortest, we find all the compass of the gamut described, from the groan to the pean, from the deep self-accusation to the transport of

gratitude. Hence a singular completeness in them, and an adaptation to the feelings of those mixed assemblies which were destined to sing them. "Is any merry? let him sing Psalms;" but is any melancholy, few of those Psalms close without expressing sympathy with his desolate feelings too.

Thirdly, What were the causes of this variety? It sprang partly from the varying moods of David's mind, which was singularly sensitive in its feelings, and rapid in its transitions from feeling to feeling, and from thought to thought—his life was, and his poetry is, an April day—and partly because, being a prophet, his prophetic insight often comes in to shed the bright smile of his future prospects upon the darkness of his present state.

Fourthly, We notice in the Psalms a "more exceeding" simplicity and artlessness, than in the rest of even Scripture poetry. Any current, though it were of blood or of flame, looks less spontaneous than the single spark or blood-drop. Many of the prophetic writings have a force, and swell, and fierceness, approaching to a certain elaboration; while David's strains distill, like "honey from the rock." The swift succession of his moods is childlike. His raptures of enthusiasm are as brief as they are lofty. Every thing proclaims a primitive age, a primitive country, and a primitive spirit. Such snatches of song, unimpregnated with religion, sung the Caledonian bards in their wildernesses, and the fair-haired Scalds of Denmark in their galleys.

Fifthly, The piety of the Psalms is altogether inexplicable, except on the theory of a peculiar inspiration. The touched spirit of David, whether wandering in the desert, or seated in his own palace; whether in defeat or victory; whether in glory or in deep guilt—turns instinctively to heaven. Firmly, with his blood-red hand, he grasps the Book of the Law of his God! From old promises, as well as fresh revelations, he extracts the hope, and builds up the image of a coming Redeemer! It is beautiful especially to see the wanderer of Maon and Engedi, surrounded by the lion-faces of his men—the center of Israel's disaffection, distress, and despair—retiring from their company,

to pray, in the clefts of the rock; or, sleepless, amid their savage, sleeping forms, and the wild music of their breathing, singing to his own soul those sacred poems, which have been the life of devotion in every successive age. It is often, after all, to such places, and to such society, that lofty genius, like Salvator's, goes, to extract a desert wealth of inspiration, which is to be found nowhere else. But it is not often that such hard-won spoils are carried home and laid on the altar of God.

Sixthly, from all these qualities of the Psalms, arises their exquisite adaptation to the praising purposes, alike of private Christians, of families, and of public assemblies, in every age. We are far from denying that other aids to, and expressions of, devotion may be legitimately used; but David, after all, has been the chief singer of the Church, and the hold in the wilderness is still its grand orchestra. Some, indeed, as of old, that are discontented and disgusted with life, may have repaired to it, but there, too, you trace the footsteps of the widow and fatherless. There the stranger, in a strange land, has dried his tears; and there those of the penitent have been loosened in gracious showers. There, the child has received an early foretaste of the sweetness of the green pastures and still waters of piety. There, the aged has been taught confidence against life or death, in the sure mercies of David; and there, the darkness of the depressed spirit has been raised up, and away like a cloud on the viewless tongue of the morning wind. But mightier spirits, too, have derived strength from those Hebrew melodies. The soul of the Reformer has vibrated under them to its depths; and the lone hand of a Luther, holding his banner before the eyes of Europe, has trembled less that it was stretched out to the tune of David's heroic psalms. On them the freed spirit of the martyr has soared away. And have not destruction and death heard their fame, when, on the brown heaths of Scotland, the stern lay was lifted up by the persecuted, like a new-drawn sword, and waved flashing before the eyes of the foemen—

> "In Judah's land, God is well known,
> His name's in Israel great;

In Salem is his tabernacle,
In Zion is his seat.
There arrows of the bow he brake,
The shield, the sword, the war;
More glorious thou than hills of prey,
More excellent art far."

Wild, holy, tameless strains, how have ye ran down through ages, in which large poems, systems, and religions, have perished, firing the souls of poets, kissing the lips of children, smoothing the pillows of the dying, storming the warrior to heroic rage, perfuming the chambers of solitary saints, and clasping into one the hearts and voices of thousands of assembled worshipers; tinging many a literature, and finding a home in many a land; and still ye seem as fresh, and young, and powerful as ever; yea, preparing for even mightier triumphs than when first chanted! Britain, Germany, and America now sing you; but you must yet awaken the dumb millios of China and Japan.

We select two or three of them for particular survey. We have first the 8th Psalm, which, if not one of David's earliest productions, seems, at least, to reflect faithfully his early feelings. The boy's feelings, when crystalized by the force of the man's experience, are generally genuine poetry. The moods of youth, when clad in the words of manhood, and directed to its purposes, become "apples of gold, set in a network of silver." The inspiring thought, in this solemn little chant, is that of wonder—the root of all devotion, as well as of all poetry and philosophy. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers—the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained—what is man?" The point of view he thus assumes is inexplicable, except on the supposition of his entertaining an approximately true notion of the magnitude of those starry globes. If they had appeared to him only a few hundred bright spangles on the black robe of night, what was there in them so to have dwarfed the earth, with its vast expanse and teeming population? But David's imagination and faith combined to turn

his eye into a telescope—a glimmer of the true starry scheme came like a revelation to his soul; and, considering at once the magnitude of the heavenly bodies, and their order, beauty, and luster, he cried out, "What is man?" This was his first feeling; but it was breathlessly followed by a perception of the exceeding grandeur of man's position in reference to this lower world. "Thou hast made him lord over the works of thy hands below," although these sovereign heavens seem to defy his dominion, and to laugh over his tiny head. It was not permitted even to David to foresee the time when man's strong hand was to draw that sky nearer, like a curtain—when man was to unfold its laws, to predict its revolutions, and to plant the flag of triumph upon its remote pinnacles. Since his eye rested, half in despair, upon that ocean of glory, and since he drew back from it in shuddering admiration, how many bold divers have, from every point of the shore, plunged amid its waters, and what spoils brought home—here the single pearl of a planet, and here the rich coral of a constellation, and here again, the convolulted shell of a firmament—besides, what all have tended to give us, the hope of fairer treasures, of entire argosies of supersolar spoil, till the word of the poet shall become true—

> "Heaven, hast thou secrets?
> Man unbares me, I have none."

As a proper pendant to the 8th Psalm, we name next the 139th.

Here the poet inverts his gaze, from the blaze of suns, to the strange atoms composing his own frame. He stands shuddering over the precipice of himself. Above is the All-encompassing Spirit, from whom the morning wings can not save, and below, at a deep distance, appears amid the branching forest of his animal frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made, the abyss of his spiritual existence, lying like a dark lake in the midst. How, between mystery and mystery, his mind, his wonder, his very reason, seem to rock like a little

boat between the sea and the sky. But speedily does he regain his serenity; when he throws himself, with childlike haste and confidence into the arms of that Fatherly Spirit, and murmurs in his bosom, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto *me*, O God; how great is the sum of them;" and looking up at last in his face, cries—"Search me, O Lord. I can not search thee; I can not search myself; I am overwhelmed by those dreadful depths; but search me as thou only canst; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

But hark! the "voice of the Lord is upon the waters." The God of glory thundereth, and it is a powerful voice which cometh forth from the Lord. No marvel that David's blood is up, and that you see his hand "pawing," like Job's war-horse, for the pen of the lightning. The 29th Psalm surpasses all descriptions of a thunder-storm, including those of Lucretius, Virgil, and Byron, admirable as all those are. That of Lucretius is a hubbub of matter; the lightning is a mere elemental discharge, not a barbed arrow of vengeance; his system will not permit a powerful personification. Virgil's picture in the Georgics is superb, but has been somewhat vulgarized to our feelings by many imitations, and the old commonplaces about "Father Jove, and his thunderbolts." Byron does not give us that overwhelming sense of unity which is the poetry of a thunder-storm—cloud answers to cloud, and mountain to mountain; it is a brisk and animated controversy in the heavens, but you have not the feeling of all nature bowing below the presence of one avenging Power, with difficulty restrained from breaking forth to consume—of one voice creating the sounds—of one form hardly concealed by the darkness—of one hand grasping the livid reins of the passing chariot—and of one sigh of relief testifying to the feelings of gratitude on the part of nature and of man—when, in the dispersion of the storm, the one mysterious power and presence has passed away. It is the godhood of thunder which the Hebrew poet has expressed, and no other poet has. Like repeated peals, the name of the Lord

sounds down all the 29th Psalm, solemnizing and harmonizing it all—"The voice of the Lord is upon the waters—the God of glory thundereth; the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh; the voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; the Lord sitteth upon the flood; the Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." Thus are all the phenomena of the storm—from the agitated waters of the sea, to the crashing cedars of Lebanon—from the depths of Bashan's forest, bared to its every fallen leaf, and every serpent's hole, in the glare of the lightning, to the premature calving of the hind—from the awe of the quaking wilderness, to the solemn peace and whispered worship of God's people in his temple—bound together by the name and presence of God as by a chain of living fire.

> "When science, from creation's face,
> Enchantment's vail withdraws,
> What lovely visions yield their place
> To cold material laws."

True, but not merely *lovely* but dreadful visions recede before the dawn of science; while the rainbow becomes less beautiful, the thunder becomes less sublime. But this poet seems not to feel, that, when science reaches its noonday, those visions shall return, for, indeed, they are something better than mere visions. The thunder, after all, *is* the voice of God. Every particle of that tempest is an instant emanation from a present Deity. Analyze electricity as strictly as you can, the question recurs, "What is it, whence comes it?" and the answer must be, From an inconceivable, illimitable Power behind and within those elements—in one word, from God. So that the boy who throws himself down in terror before the black cloud, as before a frown, is wiser than the man of science, who regards it as he would its picture. So that the devout female who cries out, "there's the power to crush us, were it but permitted," is nearer the truth than the pert prater who, amid the

play of those arrows of God, takes out his watch to calculate their distance, or turns round to prove, according to the doctrine of chances, that there is little or no danger. So that the congregation, who are awed to silence by this oratory, are the real savants of the thunder, which must, like all natural objects, reflect the feelings of the human soul; and the higher that soul, it will appear the more mysterious; and the humbler that soul, it will appear the more terrible. The ignorant may regard it with superstition—the great and good must, with solemn reverence.

The 18th Psalm is called by Michaelis more artificial, and less truly terrible, than the Mosaic odes. In structure, it may be so, but surely not in spirit. It appears to many besides us, one of the most magnificent lyrical raptures in the Scriptures. As if the poet had dipped his pen in "the brightness of that light which was before his eye," so he describes the descending God. Perhaps it may be objected that the *nodus* is hardly worthy of the *vindex*—to deliver David from his enemies, could Deity even be imagined to come down? But the objector knows not the character of the ancient Hebrew mind. That mind was "DRUNK WITH GOD." He had not to descend from heaven; he was nigh—a cloud like a man's hand might conceal —a cry, a look might bring him down. And why should not David's fancy clothe him, as he came, in a panoply befitting his dignity, in clouds spangled with coals of fire? If he was to descend, why not in state? The proof of the grandeur of this Psalm, is in the fact that it has borne the test of almost every translation, and made doggerel erect itself, and become divine. Even Sternhold and Hopkins, its fiery whirlwind lifts up, purifies, touches into true power, and then throws down, helpless, and panting upon their ancient common.

Perhaps the great charm of the 18th Psalm, apart from the poetry of the descent, is the exquisite and subtile alternation of the *I* and the *Thou*. We have spoken of parallelism, as the key to the mechanism of Hebrew song. We find this as existing between David and God—the delivered, and the deliverer—

beautifully pursued throughout the whole of this Psalm. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised." "He sent from above; he took me; he drew me out of many waters." "Thou wilt light my candle." "Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation." "Thou hast girded me with strength unto battle." "Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies." "Thou hast made me the head of the heathen." The Psalm may thus be likened to a stormy dance, where we see David dancing, not now before, but by the side of, the Majesty on high. It has been ingeniously argued, that the existence of the *I* suggests, inevitably as a polar opposite, the thought of the *Thou*, that the personality of man, proves thus the personality of God; but, be this as it may, David's perception of that personality is nowhere so intense as here. He seems not only to see, but to feel and touch, the object of his gratitude and worship.

We must not omit the 104th Psalm, although not probably from David's pen. It is said by Humboldt to present a picture of the entire Cosmos; and he adds—"We are astonished to see, within the compass of a poem of such small dimensions, the universe, the heavens and the earth, drawn with a few grand strokes." Its touches are indeed few, rapid—but how comprehensive and sublime! Is it God?—he is "clothed with light as with a garment," and when he takes his morning or his evening walk, it is on the "wings of the wind." The winds or lightnings?—they are his messengers or angels: "Stop us not," they seem to say, "the King's business requireth haste." The waters?—the poet shows them in flood, covering the face of the earth, and then as they now lie, inclosed within their embankments, to break forth no more forever. The springs?—he traces them, by one inspired glance, as they run among the hills, as they give drink to the wild and lonely creatures of the wilderness, as they nourish the boughs on which sing the birds, the grass on which feed the cattle, the herb, the corn, the olive-tree, and the vine, which fill the mouth, cheer the heart, and radiate round the face of man. Then he skims

with bold wing all lofty objects—the trees of the Lord on Lebanon, "full of sap"—the fir-trees and the storks which are upon them—the high hills, with their wild goats—and the rocks, with their conies. Then he soars up to the heavenly bodies—the sun and the moon. Then he spreads abroad his wings in the darkness of the night, which "hideth not from him," and hears the beasts of the forest creeping abroad to seek their prey, and the roar of the lions to God for meat, coming up, vast and hollow, like embodied sound, upon the winds of midnight. Then, as he sees the shades and the wild beasts fleeing together, in emulous haste, from the presence of the morning sun, and man, strong and calm in its light as in the smile of God, hieing to his labor, he exclaims, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all!" He casts next one look at the ocean—a look glancing at the ships which go there, at the leviathan which plays there; and then, piercing down to the innumerable creatures, small and great, which are found below its unlifted vail of waters. He sees, then, all the beings, peopling alike earth and sea, waiting for life and food around the table of their Divine Master—nor waiting in vain—till, lo! he hides his face, and they are troubled, die, and disappear in chaos and night. A gleam, next, of the great resurrections of nature and of man comes across his eye. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth." But a greater truth still succeeds, and forms the climax of the Psalm —(a truth Humboldt, with all his admiration of it, notices not, and which gives a Christian tone to the whole)—"*The Lord shall rejoice in* his works." He contemplates a yet more perfect Cosmos. He is "to consume sinners" and sin "out of" this fair universe: and then, when man is wholly worthy of his dwelling, shall God say of both it and him, with a yet deeper emphasis than when he said it at first, and smiling, at the same time, a yet warmer and softer smile, "It is very good." And with an ascription of blessing to the Lord does the poet close this almost angelic descant upon the works of nature, the

glory of God, and the prospects of man. It is not merely the unity of the Cosmos that he has displayed in it, but its progression, as connected with the parallel progress of man—its thorough dependence on one Infinite Mind—the "increasing purpose" which runs along it—and its final purification, when it shall blossom into the "bright consummate flower" of the new heavens and the new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness;"—this is the real burden, and the peculiar glory of the 104th Psalm.

We must not linger longer among those blessed Psalms, whether those of David, or those composed in later times, else we could have dilated with delight upon the noble 19th, where the sun of the world, and the law of God, his soul's sun, are bound together in a panegyric, combining the glow of the one and the severe purity of the other; upon the 22d, which some suppose Christ to have chanted entire upon the cross; upon the 24th, describing the entrance of the King of Glory into his sanctuary; upon the Penitential Psalms, coming to a dreary climax in the 51st; upon such descriptive and poetic strains as the 65th; upon the prophetic power and insight of the 72d and the 2d; and on the searching self-communings, and the spirit of gentleness, humility, and love for God's word, which distinguish the whole of the 119th. But, perhaps, finer than all, are those little bursts of irrepressible praise, which we find at the close. During the course of the book, you had been conducted along very diversified scenes; now beside green pastures, now through dark glens, now by still waters, now by floods, and now by dismal swamps, now through the silent wilderness, where the sun himself was sleeping on his watch-tower—in sympathy with the sterile idleness below; and now through the bustle and blood of battle-fields, where the elements seemed to become parties in the all-absorbing fury of the fray; but, at last, you stand beside the Psalmists, upon a clear, commanding eminence, whence looking back on the way they had been led, forward to the future, and up to their God, now no longer hiding himself from his anointed ones, they break into

peans of praise; and not satisfied with their own orisons, call on all objects, above, around, and below, to join the hymn, become, and are worthy of becoming, the organs of a universal devotion. The last six or seven psalms are the Beulah of the book; there the sun shineth night and day, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. From a reflection of their fire, have sprung the hymn which Milton ascribes to our first parents, the hymn which closes the "Seasons," and the great psalm which swelled from the harp of Coleridge, as he struck it to the music of the Arveiron, and in the light of the morning star. And surely those bright gushes of song, occurring at the close, unconsciously typify the time when man, saved from all his wanderings, strengthened by his wrestlings, and recovered from his falls, shall, clothed in white robes, and standing in a regenerated earth, as in a temple, pour out floods of praise, harmonizing with the old songs of heaven—when the nations, as with one voice, shall sing—

"Praise ye the Lord. God's praise within
His sanctuary raise;
And to him in the firmament
Of his pow'r give ye praise.
Because of all his mighty acts,
With praise him magnify:
O praise him, as he doth excel
In glorious majesty.

Praise him with trumpet's sound; his praise
With psaltery advance:
With timbrel, harp, string'd instruments,
And organs, in the dance.
Praise him on cymbals loud: him praise
On cymbals sounding high.
Let each thing breathing praise the Lord.
Praise to the Lord give ye."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOLOMON AND HIS POETRY.

We have already glanced at some of the aspects of this great man's character; but that, both as a man, and as a writer, is far too magnificent and peculiar, not to demand a chapter to itself.

Magnificence is, indeed, the main quality of Israel's "Grand Monarque," as Coleridge calls him. The frequent sublimity, and the fluctuating interest, which surrounded his father's career, he possessed not. But the springtide of success which was his history, the abundance of his peace, his inexhaustible wealth, the pomp of his establishment, the splendor of the house and the temple which he built, the variety of his gifts and accomplishments, the richness and diversified character of his writings, and the manifold homage paid him by surrounding tribes and monarchs, all proclaimed him "every inch a king," and have rendered "Solomon and his glory," proverbial to this hour. He sat, too, in the center of a wide-spread commerce, bringing in its yearly tribute of wealth to his treasury, and of fame to his name. Even when he sinned, it was with a high hand, on a large scale, and with a certain regal *gusto;* he did not, like common sinners, sip at the cup of corruption, but drank of it, "deep and large," emptying it to the dregs. When satiety invaded his spirit, that, too, was of a colossal character, and, for a season, darkened all objects with the shade of "vanity and vexation of spirit." And when he suffered, his groans seemed those of a demigod in torment; his head became waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears. Thus, on all his

sides, bright or black, he was equally and roundly great. Like a pyramid, the shadow he cast in one direction, was as vast as the light he received on the other.

No monarch in history can be compared, on the whole, with Solomon. From the Nebuchadnezzars, the Tamerlanes, and similar "thunderbolts of war," he differs in kind, as well as in degree. He was the peaceful temple—they were the armed towers; his wisdom was greater than his strength—they were sceptred barbarians, strong in their military prowess. In accomplishments, and in the combination of good sense with genius, he reminds us of Julius Cæsar; but he, too, was a man of war from his youth, besides being guilty of crimes both against his country and his own person,* blacker far than any recorded of the proverbialist of Israel;—a union, let us rather call him, of some of the qualities of the "good Haroun Alraschid," with some of those of our own Alfred the Great. To the oriental grandeur—the love of peace, poetry, and pleasure which distinguished the caliph—he added the king's sense of justice, and homely, practical wisdom.

It was his first to prove to the world that peace has greater triumphs, and richer glories, than war. All the useful, as well as elegant arts found in him at once a pattern and a patron. He collected the floating wisdom of his country, after having intermingled it with his own, into compact shape. He framed a rude and stuttering science, beautiful, doubtless, in its simplicity, when he "spake of all manner of trees," from the cedar to the hyssop. He summoned into being the power of commerce, and its infant feats were mighty, and seemed, in that day, magical. He began to bind hostile countries together by the mild tie of barter—a lesson which might have been taught him, in the forest of Lebanon, by the interchange between the "gold clouds metropolitan" above, and the soft valleys of Eden below. He built palaces of new and noble architecture; and although no pictures adorned the gates of the temple, or shone above the altar of incense, or met the eyes of the thousands who

* See Suetonius.

worshiped within the court of the Gentiles, yet was not that temple itself—with its roof of marble and gold, its flights of steps, its altars of steaming incense, its cherubic shapes, its bulls and molten sea—one picture, painted on the canvas of the city of Jerusalem, with the aid of the hand which had painted long before the gallery of the heavens? In poetry, too, he excelled, without being so filled and transported by its power as his father; and, as with David, all his accomplishments and deeds were, during the greater part of his life, dedicated to, and accepted by, heaven.

Such is an outline of his efforts for the advancement of his country. Amid them all, the feature which most exalts, and most likens him to Jesus, is the peace of his reign. It was this which entitled him to build the temple; it is this which casts a certain soft green light, like the light of the rainbow, around his glory; and it is this which directs every Christian eye instantly to a "greater than Solomon," in the promised peace and blessedness which the 72d Psalm predicts as the results of the reign of David's son. The gorgeous Solomon, and the humble Jesus, wear one badge—the white rose of peace; the one above his crown of gold, and the other amid his crown of thorns.

Every man has a dark period in his career, whether it is publicly known or concealed, whether the man outlive or sink before it. Solomon, too, had his "hour and power of darkness." Stern justice forbids us to wink at its principal cause. It was luxury, aggravated into sin. Fullness of bread, security, splendor, wealth, like many suns shining at once upon his head, enfeebled and corrupted a noble nature. Amid the mazy dances of strange women, he was whirled away into the embrace of demon gods. He polluted the simplicity of the service he had himself established. He rushed headlong into many a pit, which he had himself pointed out, till "Wisdom" refused to be "justified" of this her chosen child. Sorrow trod faithfully and fast in his track of sin. Luxury begat listlessness, and this listlessness began soon to burn, a still slow fire, about his heart.

His misery became wonderful, passing the woe of man; the more, as in the obscuration of his great light, enemies, like birds obscene and beasts of darkness, began to stir abroad. The general opinion of the Church, founded upon the Book of Ecclesiastes, is, that he repented and forsook his sins before death. Be this true or not, the history of his fall is equally instructive. The pinnacle ever overhangs the precipice. Any great disproportion between gifts and graces, renders the former fatal as a knife is to the suicide, or handwriting to the forger. We ardently hope that Solomon became a true penitent. But, though he had not, his writings, so far from losing their value, would gain new force; the figure of their fallen author would form a striking frontispiece, and their solemn warnings would receive an amen, as from the caves of perdition. A slain Solomon!—since fell Lucifer, son of the morning, what more impressive proof of the power of evil? And, like him, he would seem majestic, though in "ruins"—not "less than archangel ruined, and the excess of glory obscured." Alas! is it not still often so in life? Do you not often see beings—whom, for their powers, accomplishments, or charms, you must almost worship—on whom the sun looks with fonder and more lingering ray—attracting, by their fatal beauty, the dark powers, and becoming monuments of folly, or miracles of woe? Is there not what we must in our ignorance call a mysterious ENVY, in the universe, which will not allow the beautiful to become the perfect, nor the strong the omnipotent, nor the lofty to reach the clouds? That ENVY (if we dare use the word) is *yet unspent;* and other mighty shades, hurled down into destruction, may be doomed to hear their elder brethren, from Lucifer to Byron, raising the thin shriek of gloomy salutation, "Are ye also become weak as we?" as they follow them into their cheerless regions.

With a bound of gladness, we pass from the dark, uncertain close of Solomon's life, to his works and genius. In these he exhibits himself in three aspects—a poetical proverbialist, a poetical inquirer, and a poetical lover; the first, in his Proverbs—the second, in the Book of Ecclesiastes—and the third, in the

Song of Songs. But, in all three, you see the true soul of a poet—understanding poet in that high sense in which the greatest poet is the wisest man.

David was essentially a lyrical, Solomon is a combination of the didactic and descriptive poet. His pictures of folly, and his praises of wisdom, prove his didactic; many scenes in the Song, and, besides others, his picture of old age in Ecclesiastes, —his descriptive powers. His fire, compared with David's, is calm and glowing—a guarded furnace, not a flame tossed by the wind; his flights are fewer, but they are as lofty, and more sustained. With less fire, he has more figure; the colors of his style are often rich as the humming-bird's wing, and proclaim, at once, a later age, and a more voluptuous fancy. The father has written hymns which storm the feelings, melt the heart, rouse the devotion, of multitudes; the son has painted still rich pictures, which touch the imaginations of the solitary and the thoughtful. The one, though a great, can hardly be called a wise poet; the other, was the poet-sage of Israel—his imagination and intellect were equal, and they interpenetrated.

The Proverbs appear to have been collected by him, with many important additions, into their present form. A few others were annexed afterward. They now lie before us, a massive collection of sententious truths, around which Solomon has hung illustrations, consisting of moral paintings, and of meditative flights.

We have first the material, or Proverbs proper. A proverb may, perhaps, be best defined a common-sense truth, condensed in a sentence, and sealed or starred with an image. It was certainly a fine conception, that of curdling up the common sense of mankind into pleasing and portable form—of driving the flocks of loose, wandering thoughts from the wide common into the penfolds of proverbs. Proverbs have been compared to the flights of oracular birds. They tell great general truths. They show the same principles and passions to have operated in every age, and prove thus the unity of man. They engrave, unintentionally, ancient manners and customs; and serve as

medals, as well as maxims. Like fables, they convey truth to the young with all the freshness and the force of fiction. In the comparative richness or meagerness of a nation's proverbs, may be read much of its intellect and character; indeed, Fletcher's saying about the songs of a country, may be transferred to its proverbs, they are better than its laws; nay, they are its laws —not the less powerful that they are not confined to statute-books, but wander from tongue to tongue and hearth to hearth. The Proverbs proper, in Solomon's collection, are not only rich in truth, but exceedingly characteristic of the Jewish people, and of those early ages. The high tendencies of the Hebrew mind—its gravity, its austerity, its constant recognition of justice as *done now*, its identification of *evil* with error ("Do not they err that devise evil?"), of crime with folly, and the perpetual up-rushing reference to Deity as a near Presence—are nowhere more conspicuous than here. The truth inscribed in them is rarely abstract or transcendental—towering up to God, on the one hand, in the shape of worship, it is always seeking entrance into man, on the other, in the form of practice. Yet profound as wisdom itself are many of its sentences. "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eatên in secret is pleasant." "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." "The righteous wisely *considereth* the house of the wicked." "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones." "The *desire* of the slothful killeth him." "Open rebuke is better than secret love." Let those who are in the habit of regarding the Proverbs as a mass of truisms, ponder such, and many similar sentences. We find all that is valuable in Emerson's famous essays on "Compensation" and "Spiritual Laws," contained in two or three of those old abrupt sentences, which had perhaps floated down from before the flood. The imagery in which they are enshrined, has a homely, quaint richness, and adds an antique setting to these "ancient most domestic ornaments."

Around such strong simplicities, rescued from the wreck of

ages, the genius of Solomon has suspended certain pictures and meditations, indubitably all his own. Not only do they stand out from, and above the rest of the book—not only are they too lengthy to have been preserved by tradition, but they bear the mark of his munificent and gorgeous mind. Some of them are moral sketches, such as those of the simple youth, in the 7th chapter—of the strange woman, in the 9th—of the drunkard and glutton, in the 23d—and of the virtuous woman, in the 21st—sketches reminding you, in their fullness, strength, and fidelity, of the master-pieces of Hogarth, who had them avowedly in his eye; others are pictures of natural objects, looking in amid his moralizings as sweetly and refreshingly as roses at the open window of a summer school-room. Such we find at the close of the 27th chapter—"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. The hay appeareth, and the tender grass showeth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered; the lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price (or rent) of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens." A third class consists of poetic peans in praise of wisdom, and solemn appeals to those who reject its counsel, and will none of its reproof. The most plaintive of these occurs in the first chapter of the book, and forms a striking motto upon its opening portals. Scripture contains no words more impressive than Wisdom's warning—"Because I called, and ye refused, therefore I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh—when your destruction cometh as a whirlwind." The laughter of a God is a tremendous conception. Suppose the lightning a ghastly smile, and the after-thunder a peal of laughter from the sky at poor, cowering man; what a new horror would this add to the tragedy of the storm, and yet it were but a hieroglyphic of the irony implied in Divine derision! While the giants were preparing, with labor dire, and din far heard, to storm the skies, the "gods," says Paracelsus, "were calm; and Jove prepared his thunder—all old tales." But, in the hearing of the Hebrew

poet, while the kings of the earth are plotting against the Lord and his anointed, a laugh, instead of thunder, shakes the heavens, makes the earth to tremble, and explodes in a moment the long-laid designs of the enemy, who become frantic more on account of the contemptuous mode, than the completeness, of the destruction. What if the last "Depart, ye cursed!" were to be accompanied by celestial laughter, reverberated from the hoarse caverns of hell?

The praise and personification of wisdom, reach Solomon's highest pitch. To personify an attribute well, is a great achievement; to sustain "strength," or "force," or "beauty," through a simile or an apostrophe, is not easy, much less to supply a long soliloquy for the lips of Eternal Wisdom. Macaulay has coupled Bunyan and Shelley together, as masters in the power of glorifying abstractions—of painting spiritual conceptions in the colors of life; nay, spoken of them as if they had been the first and greatest in the art. He has forgotten Eschylus, and those strong life-like forms who aid in binding Prometheus to his rock. He has forgotten Solomon's Wisdom, who stands up an "equal among mightiest energies," and speaks in tones so similar to, that he has often been supposed one of, the Great Three. Hear the divine egotist—"When he prepared the heavens, *I* was there; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, *I* was by him, and *I* was daily his delight: *I* was set up from everlasting." As inferior only to Solomon in making metaphors move, and flushing the pale cheeks of abstract ideas, we name Blake and David Scott. To their eyes, the night of abstraction was clearer than the day; so-called dreams appeared, and were realities. *They* saw the sun standing still; they felt the earth revolving; to them, every "island" of appearance had fled away, and the mountains of conventionalism were "no more found."

We have mentioned the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress." Interesting in itself, that work is so also, as one of a class of writings of which Ecclesiastes was the first. We refer to spiritual autobiographies. We sigh and cry in vain for an

authentic account of the inner life of Shakspeare, or Bacon or Burke; but we have that (according to general belief) of Solomon, that of Bunyan, and that of a modern who chooses to entitle himself "Sartor Resartus." It were curious, and perhaps something better than curious, to review those three earnest histories together. Now, what first strikes us about them, is their great similarity. Three powerful minds, at the distance of ages, in the most diverse ranks, circumstances, and states of society, are found, in different dialects, asking the question—"What shall I do to be saved"—struggling in different bogs of the same "Slough of Despond"—trying many expedients to be rid of their burdens, and at length finding or fancying they have found, a final remedy. It is, then, the mark of man to wear a burden; it is the mark of the highest men to bear the heaviest burdens, and it is the mark of the brave and bravest men to struggle most to be free from them. The sun of the civilization of the nineteenth century, only shows the burden in a broader light, and makes the struggle against it more conspicuous, and perhaps more terrible. The preacher from the throne, and the preacher from the tub, utter the same message; in all, the struggle seems made in good faith—all are in earnest—all have surrounded their researches with a poetic beauty, only inferior to their personal interest, and all seem to typify large classes of cognate minds.

Their difficulties, however, assume diversity of form, and eliminate diversities of feeling. Solomon's weariness is not altogether, though it is in part, that of the jaded sensualist; its root lies deeper. It is the contrast between the grandeur of the human mind, and the shortness of human life, the meanness of earthly things, and the frailty of the human frame, that amazes and perplexes him. The thought of such a being, surrounded by such circumstances, inhabiting such a house, and dismissed only into the gulf of death, haunts his mind like a specter. That specter, he in vain seeks to reason away—to drown, to dissipate, or to moralize away, to outstare with a hardy look, to bring under any theory, to find any path of life

where it is not—still it rises before him, embittering his food, shadowing his wine-cup, making business a drudgery, the reading or making of books a weariness, and pleasure a refined torment. Wild, at times, with uncertainty, he spurns at the very distinctions between right and wrong, knowledge and ignorance, and prays to "God to manifest to the sons of men that they are but beasts" (what a text for Swift! nay, are not all his works really sermons on it?); but, *with the specter reflected on them*, those great barriers arise again, and he confesses, that "Wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." Death, being to him but faintly gilded with immortality, presents little prospect of relief. And thus does the wise, wealthy, and gifted king toss to and fro, on his couch of golden fire, and the Book of Ecclesiastes is simply a record of the uneasy motions, and helpless cries, of a mind as vacant as vast, seeking to be filled, and awakening an echo only of the horse-leech's cry, "Give, give."

In Bunyan, the difficulty is rather moral than intellectual. His spirit is bowed under a sense of sin, and of its infinite, endless consequences. He is humble, as if all hell were bound up in the burden on his back. "How shall I be happy on earth?" is Solomon's question; "How shall I cease to be unhappy here and hereafter?" is Bunyan's. Both feel themselves miserable; but, to Bunyan's mind, his misery seems more the result of personal guilt, than of the necessary limitations of human life, and of the human understanding.

In Sartor, we have great doubt and darkness expressed in the language of the present day. But it is not so much his personal imperfection, or the contrast between the capacities of his soul and the vanity and shortness of his life, which affects him, as it is the uncertainty of his religious creed. Devoured by the religious element, as by central fire, the faith of his fathers supplies, he thinks, no adequate fuel. Unable to believe it fully, he is incapable of hating or of striking at its roots; he deems that rottenness has withered it; but is it not still the old elm-tree under which, in childhood, he sported, mused, and prayed?

No other shelter or sanctuary can he find. And then, in wild, fierce, yet self-collected, wanderings, "Gehenna buckled under his calm belt," he walks astray, over the wilderness of this world, seeking, above all things, after rest; or that he should awake, and find his pilgrimage, indeed, to be a dream!

Thus pass on the three notable pilgrims—the crowned Solomon, the bush-lipped and fiery-eyed Baptist, and the strong literary Titan of this age—each, for a season, carrying his hand, like the victims in Vathek, upon his breast, and saying, "It burns." All attain, at last, a certain peace and satisfaction. The conclusion of Solomon's whole matter is, "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." "Here is one solid spot amid an ocean of vexation, of uncertainty, of contradiction, and of vanity, and on it I will rest my weary foot." Bunyan, a poor, burdened sinner, clings to the cross, and it is straightway surrounded by the shining ones, who come from heaven to heal and comfort the sufferer. Sartor says, "I am not meant for pleasure; I despise it; happiness is not meant for me, nor for man; but I may be blessed in my misery and darkness, and this is far better." All those results seem beautiful, in the light of the tears and the tortures through which they have been reached. All are sincere and strong-felt. But, while the last is vague and unsupported as a wandering leaf, while the first is imperfect as the age in which it was uttered, the second is secure in its humility, strong in its weakness, has ministered, and is ministering, comfort, peace, and hope—how living and life-giving to thousands!—and if it fail—

> "The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble."

We leave the machinery, the meaning, and the manners of Solomon's Song, to Charles Taylor, Pye Smith, and other critics; we have a sentence to say as to its spirit and poetry. It is conceived throughout in a vein of soft and tender feeling, and suffused with a rich, slumbrous light, like that of a July

afternoon, trembling amid beds of roses. There are flowers, but they are not stirred, but fanned by the winds of passion. The winds of passion themselves are asleep to their own music. The figures of speech are love-sick. The dialogues seem carried on in whispers. Over all the scenery, from the orchards of pomegranates, the trees of frankincense, and the fountains of the gardens, to the lions' dens, and the mountains of the leopards, there rests a languor, like sunny mist, and shines "the bloom of young desire, and purple light of love." To call all this the effect of an oriental climate and genius, is incorrect; for, first, all the writings in Scripture were by orientals; and, secondly, we find certain occidental poems, such as "Romeo and Juliet," or "Lalla Rookh," nearly as rich as the Song. We must either trace it to some sudden impulse given to the imagination of Solomon, whether by spring coming before her time—or appearing in more than her wonted beauty—or flushing over the earth with more than her wonted spirit-like speed—or by the access of a new passion, which, even in advanced life, makes all things, from the winter in the blood to the face of nature, new and fresh, as if after a shower of sunny rain; or we may trace it, with the general voice of the church, to the influence of new views of the loveliness of Messiah's character and of his future church, around whom, as if hastily to pay the first-fruits of the earth's homage to her lord and his bride, cluster in here all natural beauties, at once reflecting their image and multiplying their splendors. Solomon might have had in his eye a similar vision to that afterward seen by John of the bride, the Lamb's wife, coming down from God out of heaven; and surely John himself never described his vision under sweeter, although he has with sublimer, images. "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

We notice in this poem two classes of descriptions—the one of persons, the other of natural scenes—and a singular contrast

between them. Solomon's description of persons is, in general, gorgeous to exuberance. Images, from artificial and from natural objects, are collected, till the bride or bridegroom is decked with as many ornaments as a summer's landscape or a winter's night sky; the raven's plumage is plucked from his wing, the dove's eye is extracted from its socket, perfumes are brought from beds of spices, and lilies led drooping out of their low valleys—nay, the vast Lebanon is himself ransacked to garnish and glorify the one dear image; on the other hand, the description of natural scenes is simple in the extreme, yet beautiful as if nature were describing herself. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." This is the green of nature looking in amid the glare of passion. We have here love first exaggerating the object beloved, and then retiring to hide her blushes of shame amid the cool leaves of the garden.

We find, in Shakespeare, a similar intermixture of natural objects with passionate scenes, and a similar subdued tone in their description. It is not that he does this for the sake of effect, nor that he quails—he merely cools—before nature. The natural allusions act like the touch of female affection, laid on the red brow of passion, and opening the fountain of tears. His madmen, like poor Lear, are crowned with flowers; his castles of gloom and murder are skimmed by swallows, and swaddled in delicate air; in his loneliest ruins lurk wild grasses and flowers, and around them the lightning itself becomes a crown of glory.

Regarding the question as to the *Christian* application of the Song, as still a moot, and as a non-essential point, we forbear to express an opinion on it. As a love dialogue, colored to the proper degree with a sensuous flush, "beautiful exceedingly" in its poetry, and portraying with elegance, ancient customs, and the inextinguishable principles of the human heart, this poem is set unalterably in its own niche. It has had many commentaries, but, in our judgment, the only writer who has caught

its warm and glowing spirit, is Samuel Rutherford, who has not, indeed, written a commentary upon it, but whose "Letters" are inspired by its influence, and have nearly reproduced all its language. Despite the extravagancies with which they abound, when we consider the heavenliness of their spirit, the richness of their fancy, the daring, yet devout tone of their language, the wrestling earnestness of their exercise, their aspirings after the Savior, in whom the writer's soul often sees "seven heavens," and to gain whom, he would burst through "ten hells"—we say, blessings and perfumes on the memory of those dungeons whence so many of these letters came, and on that of their rapt, seraphic author whose chains have been "glorious liberty to many a son of God." The soul was strong which could spring heaven-high under his prison load, and which has made the cells of his supposed infamy holy and haunted ground, both to the lovers of liberty and the worshipers of God.

It is with a certain melancholy that we dismiss the great monarch of Israel. We remember once feeling a strong shudder of horror at hearing an insinuation (we believe not true) that the author of a very popular and awful religious poem, was not himself a pious man. It was one of those assertions which make the heart quake, and the hand catch convulsively at the nearest object, as if earth were sinking below us. But the thought of the writer of a portion of the Bible being a "cast-away"—a thought entertained by some of repute in the Christian world—is far more painful. It may not, as we have seen, detract from, but rather add to, the effect of his writings; but does it not surround them with a black margin? Does not every sentence of solemn wisdom they contain, seem clothed in mourning for the fate of its parent? On Solomon's fate, we dare pronounce no judgment; but, even granting his final happiness, it is no pleasing task to record the mistakes, the sins, the sorrows, or even the repentance of a being originally so noble. If at "evening time it was light" with him, yet did not a scorching splendor torment the noon, and did not thunders, melting into heavy showers, obscure the after-day? The

"glory of Solomon" is a fearful and troubled glory: how different from the meek light of the life of Isaac—most blameless of patriarchs—whose history is that of a quiet, gray autumnal day, where, with no sun visible, all above and below seems diluted sunshine—a day as dear as it is beautiful, and which dies regretted, as it has lived enjoyed!

CHAPTER IX.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETIC BOOKS.

We resign to other writers—many of whom are so well competent for it—the task of disproving the theory that the prophets were the mere rhythmic historians of past events—merely the bards of their country. Indeed, one of the shrewdest of German critics, De Wette, abandons this as untenable, and concedes them a certain foresight of the future, although he evidently conceives it to be little better than the instinct of cats forecasting rain, or of vultures scenting carrion. We propose at present to make a few remarks illustrative of the prophetic office among the Hebrews. The general picture of a prophet has been given already.

The prophet, first, had a supernatural gift. That this was more than genius, is evident from the terms applied to it; the power moving them is always a *moral* power; it is the "*Holy*" Ghost—it is a *divine* power—"the spirit of the Lord is upon them"—from the purposes served by their utterances, which are uniformly, not merely artistic, but moral and spiritual—from the objects presented to their view, often lying hid in regions which the most eagle-eyed genius were unable to scan—and from the miraculous circumstances by which so many of their messages were sealed. That this supernatural power did not interrupt, though it elevated, their natural faculties, is evident from the diversities of style and manner which are found not only among different prophets, but in different parts of the same prophecy. This gift, again, operated on the prophets in divers manners. Sometimes God visited their minds by silent sugges-

tion; sometimes he spoke to them as he did to Samuel, by a voice; sometimes the prophet fell into a trance or day-dream, and sometimes God instructed him through a vision of the night; sometimes angelic agency was interposed as a medium, and sometimes God directly dawned upon the soul; sometimes future events were distinctly predicted; sometimes they were adumbrated in figure; and sometimes counsel, admonition, and warning, constituted the entire "burden." Language, often creaking under the load, was the general vehicle for the prophetic message, but frequently, too, "signs" and "wonders" of the most singular description were employed to shadow and to sanction it. The prophet, who at one time only smote with his hand, stamped with his foot, or cried with his voice, at another prepared stuff for removing, or besieged a tile, or married "a wife of whoredoms," to symbolize the mode, and attest the certainty, of approaching events. Bolder upon occasion still, he dared to stretch forth his hand to the wheel of nature, and it stopped at his touch—to call for fire from heaven, and it came when he called for it.

The power of prophecy was fitful and intermitting: in this point, resembling genius. It was, like it,

> "A power which comes and goes like a dream,
> And which none can ever trace."

In the fine language of Hushai, it lighted upon the prophet as the "dew falleth upon the ground." Rather, it came upon his head, and stirred his hair, and kindled his eye, and inflated his breast, as a gust of wind comes upon a pine, for, though sudden, its advent was not soft as the dew. It was a nobler demoniac possession. Recovered from it, the prophet resumed his ordinary occupation, and was a common man once more. Then, too, his own words seemed strange to him; he wondered at them, as we can conceive the fabled oak wondering when it had sweltered honey. He searched what the Spirit did signify by him, nor probably was he always successful in the search.

Authors of mere human gift are often surprised at their own utterances. Even while understanding their general meaning, there are certain shades, certain emphases, a prominence given by the spirit of the hour to some thoughts and words, which seem to them unaccountable, as to a dreamer his converse, or his singing, when reviewed by the light of day. How much more must the prophet, through whom passed the mighty rushing wind of the Divinity, have stared and trembled as he recalled the particulars of the passage.

Nor was this transit of God, over the prophetic soul, silent as that of a planet. It was attended by great bodily excitement and agony. The prophets were full of the fury of the Lord. The Pythoness, panting upon her stool—Eschylus, chased before his inspiration, as before his own Furies—Michael Angelo, hewing at his Moses, till he was surrounded by a spray of stone —the Ancient Marinere, wrenched in the anguish of the delivery of his tale—give us some notion of the Hebrew prophet, with the burden of the Lord upon his heart and his eye. Strong and hardy men, they generally were; but the wind which crossed them, was a wind which could "rend rocks," and waft tongues of fire upon its wings. In apprehension of its effects, on both body and spirit, we find more than one of their number shrinking from below its power. It passed over them, notwithstanding, and, perhaps, an under-current of strength was stirred within, to sustain them in that "celestial colloquy sublime." But true inspiration does no injury, and has no drawback Nectar has no dregs.

The prophet, thus excited and inspired, was certain to deliver himself in figurative language. All high and great thought, as we have intimated before, casts metaphor from it as surely as substance produces shadow. The thought of the Hebrew bard had come from heaven, and must incarnate itself in earthly similitudes, or remain unuttered. Figure, in some cases a luxury, was here a necessity of speech. As this thought, besides, was destined to be coeval with earth, it must be expressed in that universal cipher which the language of

figure alone supplies. It, like sunlight, always explains and recommends itself to every one who has eyes to see. A figure on the breast of a truth, is like a flower in the hand of a friend. Hence, its language, like the language of flowers, is free of the world and of all its ages. It is fine to see the genius of poetry stooping to do the tasks of the prophetic power. Herself a "daughter of the king," she is willing to be the handmaid of her elder sister. Instead of an original, she is content to be the mere translator, into her own everlasting vernacular, of the oracles of heaven.

This singular form—its soul the truth of heaven—its body the beauty of earth—was attached, for wisest purposes, to the Jewish economy. It acted as God's spur, suspended by the side of the system, as it moved slowly forward. It gave life to many dead services; it mingled a nobler element with the blood of bulls and goats; it disturbed the dull tide of national degeneracy; it stirred, again and again, the old flames of Sinai; it re-wrote, in startling characters, the precepts of the moral law; and, in its perpetual and vivid predictions of Messiah's coming, and death, and reign, outshot by ages the testimony of types, rites, and ceremonies. It did for the law what preaching has done for the Gospel: it supplied a living sanction, a running comment, and a quickening influence. When, at times, its voice ceased, the cessation was mourned as a national loss; and we hear one of Israel's later psalmists complaining that "there is not among us a prophet more." And this not that Asaph lamented that there was none to sing the great deeds of his country, but that he mourned the decay of the piety and insight of which prophecy had been the "bright consummate flower." In truth, prophecy represented in itself the devotion, the insight, and the genius of the land, and of the period when it was poured forth.

This power was subjected to a certain culture. Schools of the prophets seem to have been first established by Samuel. The pupils were trained up in a knowledge of religion, and in habits of devotion. These schools were nurseries, and from

them God might, and did, choose, from time to time, his appointed instruments. Amos seems (vii. 14) to regard it as a thing uncommon, that though he was a prophet, he had not been trained in such seminaries. It is supposed by some, that those sons of the prophets were employed as their assistants, and stood in the relation which evangelists afterward bore to the apostles.

Lastly, This prophetic vision, centring in Christ, became clearer as he drew near. At first it is dim; the character of the person is but partially disclosed; his divinity glimmers faintly on the view, and a cloud of darkness rests on his predestined sufferings—on that perilous "bruising," by which he was to send forth judgment unto victory. Gradually, however, it brightens; the particulars of his mystic agony begin to flash on the view of the prophets, while, at the same time, his divine dignity is becoming luminously visible, and while the prospect of the triumphs, consequent on his death, is stirring their hearts to rapture; and, finally, the very date of the hour and power of darkness is recorded, the place of his birth is disclosed, and his coming to his father's temple is announced in thunder. Thus did the "spirit of prophecy" bear a growing testimony to Jesus. Thus did the long line of the prophets, like the stars of morning, shine more and more, till they yielded and melted in the Sun of Righteousness. And through this deepening and enlarging vision it was that the Jewish imagination, and the Jewish heart, were prepared for his coming. The prophets, kings though they were, over their own economy, were quite ready to surrender their scepters to a greater than they. Would that the sovereigns, statesmen, poets, and philosophers of the present age were equally ready to cast their crowns at the feet of that expected One, "who shall come, will come, and will not tarry."

CHAPTER X.

ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL, DANIEL.

ISAIAH.

"I FELT," says Sir W. Herschel, "after a considerable sweep through the sky with my telescope, Sirius announcing himself from a great distance; and at length he rushed into the field of view with all the brightness of the rising sun, and I had to withdraw my eyes from the dazzling object." So have we, looking out from our "specular tower," seen from a great way off the approach of the "mighty orb of song"—the divine Isaiah—and have felt awe-struck in the path of his coming. He was a prince amid a generation of princes—a Titan among a tribe of Titans; and of all the prophets who rose on aspiring pinion to meet the Sun of Righteousness, it was his—the Evangelical Eagle—to mount highest, and to catch on his wing the richest anticipation of his rising. It was his, too, to pierce most clearly down into the abyss of the future, and become an eye-witness of the great events which were in its womb inclosed. He is the most eloquent, the most dramatic, the most poetic—in one word, the most complete, of the Bards of Israel. He has not the bearded majesty of Moses—the gorgeous natural description of Job—Ezekiel's rough and rapid vehemence, like a red torrent from the hills seeking the lake of Galilee in the day of storm—David's high gusts of lyric enthusiasm, dying away into the low wailings of penitential sorrow—Daniel's awful allegory—John's piled and enthroned thunders; his power is solemn, sustained—at once measured and powerful; his step moves gracefully, at the same time that it shakes the

wilderness. His imagery, it is curious to notice, amid all its profusion, is seldom snatched from the upper regions of the Ethereal—from the terrible crystal, or the stones of fire—from the winged cherubim, or the eyed wheels—from the waves of the glassy sea, or the blanched locks of the Ancient of Days; but from lower, though lofty objects—from the glory of Lebanon, the excellency of Sharon, the waving forests of Carmel, the willows of Kedron, the flocks of Kedar, and the rams of Nebaioth. Once only does he pass within the vail—"in the year that King Uzziah died"—and he enters trembling, and he withdraws in haste, and he bears out, from amid the surging smoke and the tempestuous glory, but a single "live coal" from off the altar. His prophecy opens with sublime complaint; it frequently irritates into noble anger, it subdues into irony, it melts into pathos; but its general tone is that of victorious exultation. It is one long rapture. You see its author standing on an eminence, bending forward over the magnificent prospect it commands, and, with clasped hands, and streaming eyes, and eloquent sobs, indicating his excess of joy. It is true of all the prophets, that they frequently seem to see rather than foresee, but especially true of Isaiah. Not merely does his mind overleap ages, and take up centuries as a "little thing;" but his eye overleaps them too, and seem literally to *see* the word Cyrus inscribed on his banner—the river Euphrates turned aside—the Cross, and him who bare it. We have little doubt that many of his visions became objective, and actually painted themselves on the prophet's eye. Would we had witnessed that awful eye, as it was piercing the depths of time—seeing the To Be glaring through the thin mist of the Then!

How rapid are this prophet's transitions! how sudden his bursts! how startling his questions! how the page appears to live and move as you read! "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" "Who hath believed our report?" "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain!" "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion;

put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!" "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" He is the divine describer of a divine panorama. His sermons are not compositions, but cries, from one who "sees a sight you can not see, and hears a voice you can not hear." He realizes the old name which gradually merged in that of prophet—"seer." He is the seer—an eye running to and fro throughout the future: and as you contemplate him, you feel what a power was that sight of the olden prophets, which pierced the thickest vails, found the turf thin and the tombstone transparent, saw into the darkness of the past, the present, and the to come—the most hidden recesses of the human heart—the folds of Destruction itself; that sight which, in Ezekiel, bare the blaze of the crystal and the eyes of the wheels—which, in Daniel, read at a glance the hieroglyphics of heaven—and which, in John, blenched not before the great white throne. Many eyes are glorious; that of beauty, with its mirthful or melancholy meaning; that of the poet, rolling in its fine frenzy; that of the sage, worn with wonder, or luminous with mild and settled intelligence; but who shall describe the eye of the prophet, across whose mirror swept the shadows of empires, stalked the ghosts of kings, sketched in their loveliness the landscapes of a regenerated earth, and lay, in its terror, red and still, the image of the judgment-seat of Almighty God? Then did not sight—the highest faculty of matter or mind—come culminating to an intense and dazzling point, trembling upon Omniscience itself?

Exultation, we have said, is the pervading spirit of Isaiah's prophecy. His are the "prancings of a mighty one." Has he to tread upon idols?—he not only treads, but tramples and leaps upon them. Witness the irony directed against the stock and stone gods of his country, in the 44th chapter. Does he describe the downfall of the Assyrian monarch?—it is to the accompaniment of wild and hollow laughter from the depths of Hades, which is "moved from beneath" to meet and welcome his coming. Great is his glorying over the ruin of Babylon. With a trumpet voice he inveighs against the false fastings and

other superstitions of his age. As the panorama of the millennial day breaks in again and again upon his eye, he hails it with an unvaried note of triumphant anticipation. Rarely does he mitigate his voice, or check his exuberant joy, save in describing the sufferings of Christ. Here he shades his eyes, holds in his eloquent breath, and furls his wing of fire. But, so soon as he has passed the hill of sorrow, his old rapturous emotions come upon him with twofold force, and no pean, in his prophecy, is more joyous than the 54th chapter. It rings like a marriage bell.

The true title, indeed, of Isaiah's prophecy is a "song." It is the "Song of Songs, which is Isaiah's," and many of its notes are only a little lower than those which saluted the birth of Christ, or welcomed him from the tomb, with the burden, "He is risen, he is risen, and shall die no more!"

From this height of vision, pitch of power, and fullness of utterance, Isaiah rarely stoops to the tender. He must sail on in

> "Supreme dominion,
> Through the azure deep of air."

Yet, when he does descend, it is gracefully. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet I will not forget thee." Tears in the eye of a strong man, move more than all other human tears. But here are tears from a "fire-armed angel," and surely there is no softness like theirs.

The uniform grandeur, the pomp of diction, the almost painful richness of figure, distinguishing this prophet, would have lessened his power over the common Christian mind, had it not been for the evangelical sentiment in which his strains abound, and which has gained him the name of "the Fifth Evangelist." Many bear with Milton solely for his religion. It is the same with Isaiah. The cross stands in the painted window of his style. His stateliest figure bows before Messiah's throne. An eagle of the sun, his nest is in Calvary. Anticipating the

homage of the Eastern sages, he spreads out before the infant God treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gifts are rare and costly, but not too precious to be offered to such a being; they are brought from afar, but HE has come farther "to seek and to save that which was lost."

Tradition—whether truly or not, we can not decide—asserts that 698 years before Christ, Isaiah was sawn asunder. Cruel close to such a career! Harsh reply, this sawing asunder, to all those sweet and noble minstrelsies. German critics have recently sought to *imitate the operation*, to cut our present Isaiah into two. To halve a body is easy; it is not quite so easy to divide a soul and spirit in sunder. Isaiah himself spurns such an attempt. The same mind is manifest in all parts of the prophecy. Two suns in one sky were as credible as two such flaming phenomena as Isaiah. No! it is one voice which cries out at the beginning, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth" —and which closes the book with the promise, "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come and worship before me, saith the Lord."

JEREMIAH.

Criticism is never so unjust, as when, while exaggerating one undoubted merit in a writer, she denies him every other. This is unjust, because a great merit is seldom found alone—there has seldom, for example, been a great imagination without a great intellect; and because it is envy which allows the prominence of one faculty to conceal others which are only a little less conspicuous. Burke was long counted by many a fanciful, showy writer without judgment; although it is now universally granted that his understanding was more than equal to his fancy. It was once fashionable to praise the prodigality of Chalmers' imagination, at the expense of his intellect; it seems now admitted, that although his imagination was not prodigal, but vivid—nor his intellect subtile, though strong—

that both were commensurate. A similar fate has befallen Jeremiah. Because he was plaintive, other qualities have been denied, or grudgingly conceded him. The tears which often blinded him, have blinded his critics also.

The first quality exhibited in Jeremiah's character and history, is shrinking timidity. His first words are, "Ah, Lord God, behold I can not speak, for I am a child." The storm of inspiration had seized on a sensitive plant or quivering aspen, instead of an oak or a pine. Jeremiah, at this crisis, reminds us of Hamlet, in the greatness of his task, and the indecision or feebleness of his temperament. And yet this very weakness serves at length to attest the truth and power of the afflatus. Jeremiah, with a less pronounced personality than his brethren, supplies a better image of an instrument in God's hand, of one moved, tuned, taught, from behind and above. Strong in supernal strength, the child is made a "fenced city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall." Traces, indeed, of his original feebleness and reluctance to undertake stern duties, are found scattered throughout his prophecy. We find him, for instance, renewing the curse of Job against the day of his birth. We find him, in the same chapter, complaining of the derision to which he was subjected, in the discharge of his mission. But he is re-assured, by remembering that the Lord is with him, as a "mighty terrible one." His chief power, besides pathos, is impassioned exhortation. His prophecy is one long application. He is distinguished by powerful and searching practicalness. He is urgent, vehement, to agony. His "heart is broken" within him; his "bones shake;" he is "like a drunken man," because of the Lord, and the words of his holiness. This fury often singles out the ignorant pretenders to the prophetic gift, who abounded in the decay and degradation of Judah. Like an eagle plucking from the jackdaw his own shed plumes, does Jeremiah lay about him in his righteous rage. Their dull dreams he tears in pieces, for "what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord." For their feigned "burdens," he substitutes a weight of wrath and contempt, under which they sink into ignominy. Mingled with this

ardor of spirit, and earnestness of appeal, there are touches of poetic grandeur. Witness the picture in the 4th chapter, of the tokens attesting the forthcoming of the Lord to vengeance. Chaos comes again over the earth. Darkness covers the heaven. The everlasting mountains tremble. Man disappears from below, and the birds fly from the darkened air. Cities become ruins, and the fruitful places wildernesses, before the advancing anger of the Lord. Byron's Darkness is a faint copy of this picture; it is an inventory of horrible circumstances, which seem to have been laboriously culled and painfully massed up. Jeremiah performs his task with two or three strokes; but they are strokes of lightning.

Before closing his prophecy, this prophet must mount a lofty peak, whence the lands of God's fury, the neighboring idolatrous countries, are commanded, and pour out lava streams of invective upon their inhabitants. And it is a true martial fire which inspirits his descriptions of carnage and desolation. In his own language, he is a "lion from the swellings of Jordan, coming up against the habitation of the strong." All tears are now wiped from his face. There is a fury in his eye which makes you wonder if aught else were ever there; it is mildness maddened into a holy and a fearful frenzy. In a noble rage, he strips off the bushy locks of Gaza, dashes down the proud vessel of Moab, consumes Ammon, makes Esau bare, breaks the bow of Elam, and brandishes again, and again, and again, a sword over Babylon, crying out at each new blow, "a sword is upon the Chaldeans; a sword is upon the liars; a sword is upon her mighty men; a sword is upon their horses; a sword is upon her treasures." We have difficulty in recognizing the weeper among the willows in this homicidal Energy, all whose tears have been turned into devouring fire.

Besides his Lamentations—which have occasioned the general mistake that he is wholly an elegiac poet—fine strokes of pathos are scattered amid the urgency, the boldness, and the splendor of his prophecy. His is that melting figure of Rachel, weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because

they are not. His is that appeal to Ephraim—"Is he my dear son? is he a pleasant child?" which sounds like the yearning of God's own bowels. His the plaintive question—"Is there no balm in Gilead?" And his the wide wish of sorrow—"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep night and day for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

And was not this wide wish granted when, in the Lamentations, he poured out his heart in those deep melodies of desolation, mourning, and woe? Here, to use the beautiful language of one departed, "the scene is Jerusalem lying in heaps; the poet, the child of holy inspiration, appears upon the ruins, and, with notes of desolation and woe, strikes his harp to the fallen fortunes of his country. It was not that the pleasant land now lay waste—and it did lie waste; it was not that the daughters of Jerusalem were slain, and her streets ran red—and they did run red; but it was the temple—the temple of the Lord, with its altars, its sanctuary, its holy of holies leveled to the ground—rubbish where beauty stood, ruin where strength was: its glory fled, its music ceased, its solemn assemblies no more, and its priesthood immolated, or carried far away. These had shed their glory over Israel, and over all the land, and it was the destruction of these which gave its tone of woe to the heart of the Israelite indeed." Yet the feelings which fill his heart to bursting are of a complicated character. A sense of Israel's past glory mingles with a sense of her guilt: he weeps over her ruin the more bitterly that it is self-inflicted. There is no protest taken against the severity of the divine judgments, and yet no patriot can more keenly appreciate, vividly describe, or loudly lament the splendors that were no more. We can conceive an angrier prophetic spirit, finding a savage luxury, in comparing the deserted streets and desecrated shrines of Jerusalem with his own predictions, and crying out—"Did I not foretell all this?" as, with swift, resounding strides, flaming eye, gaunt cheek, and disheveled hair, he passed on his way through them, like the spirit of their desolation, to the wilder-

ness. Jeremiah views the scene with softer feelings, identifies himself with his country, feels Jerusalem's sword in his own heart, and lingers in fond admiration of its happier times, when the sons of Zion were comparable to fine gold—when her Nazarites were purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy than rubies—when the beloved city was full of people, great among the nations, and a princess among the provinces—the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth.

We are reminded of the "Harp of Selma," and of blind Ossian sitting amid the evening sunshine of the Highland valley, and in tremulous, yet aspiring notes, telling to his small, silent, and weeping circle, the tale of

> "Old, unhappy, far off things,
> And battles long ago."

It has become fashionable to abuse the poems of Ossian; but, admitting their forgery, as well as faultiness, they seem to us, in their *better passages*, to approach more nearly than any modern English prose to the force, vividness, and patriarchal simplicity and tenderness of the Old Testament style. Lifting up like a curtain the mist of the past, they show us a world unique and intensely poetical, peopled by heroes, bards, maidens, and ghosts, and separated by their mountains from all countries and ages save their own. It is a great picture, painted on clouds instead of canvas, and invested with colors as gorgeous as its shades are dark. Its pathos has a wild sobbing in it—an Æolian tremulousness of tone, like the wail of spirits. And than Ossian himself, the last of his race, answering the plaints of the wilderness—the plover's shriek, the "hiss" of the homeless stream, the bee in the heather bloom, the rustle of the birch above his head, the roar of the cataract behind, in a voice of kindred freedom and kindred melancholy, conversing less with the little men around him than with the giant spirits of his fathers—we have few finer figures in the whole region of poetry. Ossian, in short, ranks with the Robbers and the Se-.

sons, as a work of prodigal beauties, and more prodigal faults, and, partly through both, has impressed the world.

We return to the sweet, sad singer of Israel, only to notice the personal interest he acquires, from the fuller details given of his history. If less interesting by nature than other prophets, he is more so by circumstances. Isaiah, Elijah, and Ezekiel, "come like shadows, so depart." We know little of their ordinary life. They appear only on great occasions, and their appearance, like that of a comet, is generally a signal for surprise or terror. We scarcely can conceive of them suffering from common calamities, although sublime agonies are often theirs. Isaiah in the stocks, instead of turning back the shadow of Ahaz; Ezekiel, drawn up by a rope of rags from a dungeon, instead of being snatched away by the locks of his head toward heaven, seem incongruous conceptions. But we find Jeremiah smitten, put in the stocks, the yoke upon his neck broken; we see him sinking in the mire of the dungeons, and drawn up thence by cords; we find many similar incidents recorded in his history, which, while lessening somewhat its grandeur, add to its humanity. "Alas! my brother," is our exclamation, as we witness his woes. A brother's voice, now tremulous in grief, now urgent in entreaty now loud in anger, and now swelling into lofty poetry, sounds down upon us through the solemn centuries of the past, and we grieve that the grave denies us the blessings of a brother's presence, and the pressure of a brother's hand.

EZEKIEL.

But who dare claim kindred with Ezekiel, the severe, the mystic, the unfathomable, the lonely, whose hot, hurried breath we feel approaching us, like the breath of a furnace? Perhaps the eagle may, for his eye was as keen and as fierce as hers. Perhaps the lion may, for his voice, too, sounded vast and hollow on the wilderness wind. Perhaps the wild ass may, for his step was, like hers, incontrollable. Or does he not turn away proudly from all these, and, looking up, demand as asso-

ciates, the most fervid of the burning ones, those who, of the angelic throng, stand the nearest, and yet blench the least, before the throne of God? Does he not cry, as he sees the seven angels, holding the seven last vials of divine wrath, and coming forth from the "smoke of the glory of God," "These are my brethren," be mine to mingle with these, to be clean as these, and to bear a like "vessel of the Lord" with these? Does he not wish to stand apart even from Isaiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, and John?

The comparison of a comet, often used, and generally wasted, is strikingly applicable to Ezekiel. Sharp, distinct, yet nebulous, swift, sword-shaped, blood-red, he hangs in the Old Testament sky, rather burning as a portent, than shining as a prophet. It is not his magnitude, or solidity, so much as his intensity and his strangeness, which astonish you. It is not the amount of light he gives which you value so much, as the heat, the excitement, and the curiosity which he produces. "From what depths, mysterious stranger, hast thou come? what are the tidings of thy shadowed, yet fiery beams? and whither art thou bound?" are inevitable questions to ask at him, although the answers have not yet fully arrived. To use the language of another, "he is a treasury of gold and gems, but triple-barred, and guarded by watching seraphim."

The comet, then, is but a fiery sword protecting a system behind it. To burst beyond a boundary so sternly fixed, and expound the heights and depths of his meaning, is not our purpose. We shall be satisfied if we can catch, in dim daguerreotype, the outline of the guardian shape.

Mark, first, the lofty and visionary groundwork of his prophecy. It is the record of a succession of trances. The prophet usually hangs high between earth and the regions of the ethereal. A scenery, gigantic as that of dreams, select as that of pictures, rich as that of fancy, and distinct as that of nature, surrounds his motions, and swims before his eye. The shapes which he had seen in the temple come back upon his captive vision, but come back, altered in form, enlarged in size, and

shining in the radiance of the divine glory. How terrific the composite of the four living creatures, with their four faces and wings, seen amid a confusion of light and darkness, of still fire and leaping lightnings, of burnished brass and burning coals, coupled with the high rings of the eyed wheels, unified by the spirit moving in them all, overhung by the terrible crystal of a firmament, and that again by the sapphire throne, and that again by the similitude of a man seated upon it, surrounded, as they pursue their strait, stern path, by the girdle of a rainbow, which softens the fiery storm, and moving to the music of a multitude of waters, "as the noise of an host," which is commanded from above by a mightier, solitary voice—the voice of the Eternal! What pencil shall represent to us the glory of this apparition? or who, but one whose brow had been made adamant, and whose eye had been cleansed with lightning, could have faced it as it passed? Or shall we look at the prophet again, seized by the form of a man's hand, lifted up by a lock of his hair between earth and heaven, and brought from Chebar to Jerusalem? or shall we follow him, as he passes down the deepening abominations of his country? or shall we witness with him the man clothed with linen, baptizing Jerusalem with fire? or shall we descend after him into that nameless valley, full of dry bones? or shall we take our stand beside him on that high hill, higher far than that of Mirza's vision, or than any peak in the Delectable Mountains, and see the great city on the south, or hear the rush of the holy waters, encompassing the earth? Visions these, for which the term sublime is lowly, and the term "poetic" poor. From heaven, in some clear future day, might be expected to fall down at once the epithets which can express their glory, and the light which can explain their meaning.

We mark, next, besides his visions, a singular abundance and variety of typical acts and attitudes. Now, he eats a roll, of a deadly sweetness. Now he enacts a mimic siege against a tile, representing Jerusalem. Now he shaves his beard and hair, burns a third part in the fire, smites a third part with a knife,

scatters a third part to the winds, reserving only a few hairs as a remnant. Now he makes and shows a chain, as the worthy recompense of an evil and an insane generation. Now he prepares stuff for removing, and brings it out day after day in the sight of all. Now he stands with bread and water in his hands, but with bread, water, hands, body, and head, trembling, as if in some unheard storm, as a sign of coming tremors and tempests among his people. And now, sad necessity, the desire of his eyes, his wife, is taken away by a stroke; yet God's seal is set upon his lips, forbidding him to mourn. It was the sole link binding him to earth, and, once broken, he becomes loosened, and free as a column of smoke separated from the sacrifice, and gilded into flame by the setting sun.

Such types suited the ardent temperament of the East. They were its best oratorical gestures. They expressed what the waving of hands, the bending of knees, and the beating of breasts, could not fully do. They were solidified figures. Modern ages can show nothing equal or similar, for Burke's dagger must, by universal consent, be sheathed. But still the roll, the tile, the hair, the chain, the quaking bread and water, of Ezekiel, shall be preserved as specimens of an extinct tongue, the strangest and strongest ever spoken on earth.

We mark, next, with all critics, a peculiar boldness of spirit and vehemence of language. How can he fear man, who had trembled not in the presence of visions, the report of which on his page is yet able to bristle the hair and chill the blood? Thrown into heaven's heat, as into a furnace, he comes forth indurated to suffering and to shame—his face a flint, his "brow adamant," his eye a coal of supernatural fire. Ever afterward, his style seems hurrying in chase of the "wheels," and his colors of speech are changing and gorgeous as the light which surrounded them. That first vision seen on Chebar's banks, becomes his ideal, and all his after-predictions either reach, or aim at reaching, its glory. A certain rough power, too, distinguishes many of his chapters. He is "naked, and is not ashamed." As he felt bound to give a severe and literal tran-

script of the "things of heaven" which he saw, he conceives himself bound also literally to transcribe the things of earth and hell.

Notwithstanding this impetuosity, there comes sometimes across his jet black lyre, with its fiery strings, a soft, beautiful music, which sounds more sweetly and strangely from the medium it has found. It is not pathos, but elegant beauty, reposing amid rude strength, like a finished statue found in an aboriginal cave. There is, for instance, a picture in the 16th chapter, which a high judge calls the "most delicately beautiful in the written language of men." "Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver, and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." This seems a fragment of Solomon's Song; it is a jewel dropped from the forehead of his "spouse," and acts as a *foil* to the fearful minuteness of description which characterizes the rest of the chapter. In this point of his genius, Ezekiel resembles Dante. Like Dante, he loves the terrible; but, like Dante too, the beautiful seems to love him.

Sprinkled, besides, amid the frequent grandeurs and rare beauties of his book, are practical appeals, of close and cogent force. Such, for instance, are his picture of a watchman's duty, his parable of sour grapes, his addresses at various times to the shepherds, to the elders, and to the people of Israel. From dim imaginative heights, he comes down, like Moses from the dark

ness of Sinai, with face shining and foot stamping out indignation against a guilty people, who thought him lost upon his aerial altitudes. He is at once the most poetical and practical of preachers. This paradox has not unfrequently been exemplified in the history of preaching, as the names of Chrysostom, Taylor, Howe, Hall, and Chalmers, can testify. He who is able to fly upward, is able to return, and with tenfold impetus, from his flight. The poet, too, has an intuitive knowledge of the springs of human nature which no study and no experience can fully supply, and which enables him, when he turns from his visions to the task, to "pierce to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow," and to become a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In Ezekiel's prophecy, we find visions and practical exhortations almost equally blended—the dark and the clear alternate, and produce a fine chiaro-scuro, like

> "That beautiful uncertain weather,
> Where gloom and glory meet together."

On the range of prophetic mountains, overlooking the Pagan lands, Ezekiel, like his brethren, has a summit, and a dark and high summit it is. The fire which he flings abroad from it comes from a "furnace heated seven times hotter" than that of the rest. He dallies with the destruction of Israel's foes; he "rolls it as a sweet morsel under his tongue;" he protracts the fierce luxury; he throws it out into numerous imaginative shapes, that he may multiply his pleasure. He sings in the ear of one proud oppressor the fate of a former, as the forerunner of his own. He mingles a bitter irony with his denunciations. He utters, for example, a *lamentation* over Egypt; and such a lamentation—a lamentation without sorrow, nay, full of exulting and trampling gladness. And at last, opening the wide mouth of Hades, he throws in—"heaps upon heaps"—all Israel's enemies—Pharaoh, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, the Zidonians, in "ruin reconciled"—and with a shout of laughter

leaves them massed together in one midnight of common destruction.

Ezekiel was a priest as well as a prophet, and alludes more frequently than any of the prophets to the ceremonial institutes of the temple. He was every inch a Jew; and none of the prophets possessed more attachment to their country, more zeal for their law, and more hatred to its foes. It is not enough for him to predict the ruin of Zion's *present* enemies; he must spring forward into the future, organize and bring up from the far north a shadowy army of enemies, Gog and Magog, against the mountains of Israel, and please his insatiate spirit of patriotism, by whelming them also in a vaster and a final doom. And leaving them to their "seven months' burial," he hurries away, in the hand of God, to the very high mountain, where, in place of the fallen temple and deserted streets of Jerusalem, the new city, the new temple, and the new country of the prince appear before his view, and comfort him under the darkness of the present, by the transcendent glories of the future hovering over the history of his beloved people.

Such a being was Ezekiel—among men, but not of them—detained in the company of flesh, his feet on earth, his soul floating amid the cherubim. We have tried to describe him; but perhaps it had been our wisdom to have said only, as he heard it said to an object representing well the swiftness, strength, and impetuosity of his own spirit—"O wheel!"

Amplification is asserted, by Eichhorn and others, to be the peculiarity of Ezekiel. It was as truly asserted by Hall, to be the *differentia* of Burke. He no doubt describes minutely the objects before him; but this because, more than other prophets, he had *objects* visually presented, complicated and minute to describe. But his description of them is always terse and succinct; indeed, the stern literality with which he paints ideal and spiritual figures is one cause of his obscurity. He never deals with his visions artistically or by selection, but seems simply to turn his soul out before us, to daguerreotype the dimmest of his dreams. Thus, too, Burke, from the vividness of his imagina

tion, seems often to be rhetorically expanding and exaggerating while, in fact, he is but severely copying from the large pictures which have arisen before his view.

We know little of this prophet's history: it is marked chiefly by the procession of his predictions, as during twenty-one years they marched onward to the mountain-top, where they were abruptly closed. But we can not successfully check our fancy, as she seeks to represent to us the face and figure of this our favorite prophet. We see him young, slender, long-locked, stooping, as if under the burden of the Lord—with a visible fire in his eye and cheek, and an invisible fire about his motions and gestures, earnest purpose pursuing him like a ghost, a wild beauty hanging around him, like the blossom on the thorn tree, and the air of early death adding a supernatural age and dignity to his youthful aspect. We see him, as he moved through the land, a sun-gilded storm, followed by looks of admiration, wonder, and fear; and, like the hero of "Excelsior," untouched by the love of maidens, unterrified by the counsel of elders, undismayed by danger or by death, climbing straight to his object. We see him at last, on the Mount of Vision—the Pisgah of prophecy—first, with rapturous wonder, saluting the spectacle of that mystic city and those holy waters—then crying out, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation"—and at last, behold, the burning soul exhales through the burning eyes, and the wearied body falls down in his own solitary chamber—for it had been indeed a "dream," but a dream as true as are the future reign of Jesus and the future glory of the city and church of God.

DANIEL.

We require almost to apologize for introducing Daniel into the same cluster of prophets with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. And this not because it is rich enough without him, still less that he is not worthy of the conjunction, but that he seems at

first to belong to a different order of men. They were prophets, and little else. He was a chief counselor in a great empire. They seem to have been poor, solitary, and wandering men, despised and rejected; he was the favorite of monarchs. Their predictions exposed them to danger and shame; his "dreams" drew him aloft to riches and honor. They were admitted now and then among princes, because they were prophets; but his power of prophecy made him a prince. Their predictions came generally naked to their waking eyes—they were day-dreams; but his were often softened and shaded by the mist of sleep. And yet we do feel justified in putting the well-conditioned and gold-hung Daniel beside the gaunt, hungry, and wild-eyed sons of the prophets we have just been picturing. Souls, and dark piercing eyes expressing similar souls, are kindred, whether they burn 'neath the brows of beggars or of kings.

"Sleep on," said an unhappy literary man, over the dust of Bunyan, in Bunhillfields, "thou prince of dreamers." Prince the third he was; for, while Joseph is the first, Daniel is the second monarch in this dim dynasty. His pillow was at times a throne—the throne of his genius, the throne of empires, and of all future ages. His imagination, fettered during the day by the cares of state, lanched out at night into the sea of futurity, and brought home, from its remotest shores, spoils of which we are only yet learning the value and the meaning. It was by understanding the cipher of his own dreams, that he learned to expound that of others. As the poet is the best, nay, only true critic of poetry—as the painter can best understand pictures—and the orator best appreciate, whoever else may feel, eloquence—the dreamer alone can expound dreams.

Οναρ εστι Διος—"a dream is from God," is one of the earliest, shortest, and truest of sentences. Strange, stuttering, imperfect, but real and direct messengers from the Infinite, are our dreams. Like worn-out couriers, dying with their news at the threshold of the door, dreams seem sometimes unable to

utter their tidings. Or is it rather that we do not yet understand their language, and must often thus lay missives aside, which contain at once our duty and our destiny? No theory of dreams as yet seems entirely satisfactory; but most imperfect are those theories which deny in them any preternatural and prophetic element. What man for years watches his dreams—ranges them each morning round his couch—compares them with each other, "spiritual things with spiritual"—compares them with events—without the profound conviction that a superhuman power is "floating, mingling, interweaving," with those shapeless shades—that in dreams he often converses with the dead, meets with the loosened spirits of the sleeping upon common ground, exerts powers unknown to his waking moments, recalls the past though perished, sees the present though distant, and descries many a clear spot through the mist of the future? The dreaming world—as the region where all elements are mingled, all contradictions reconciled, all tenses lost in one—supplies us with the only faint conception we have of that awful NOW, in which the Eternal dwells. In every dream does not the soul, like a stream, sink transiently into the deep abyss, whence it came, and where it is to merge at death, and are not the confusion and incoherence of dreams just the hubbub, the foam, and the struggle, with which the river weds the ocean?

But all dreams, which ever waved rapture over the brow of youthful genius, dreaming of love or heaven, or which ever distilled poison on the drugged and desperate repose of unhappy bard or philosopher, who has experienced the "pains of sleep," or cried aloud, as he awoke in struggles—"I shall sleep no more," must yield in magnitude, grandeur, and comprehensiveness, to the dreams which Daniel expounded or saw. They are all colossal in size, as befitted dreams dreamed in the palaces of Babylon. No ears of corn, blasted or flourishing—no kine, fat or lean—appear to Daniel; but *here* stands up a great image, with head of gold, breast of silver, belly of brass, and feet of iron, mingled with mire clay; and *there* waves a tree,

tall as heaven, and broad as earth. *Here*, again, as the four winds are striving upon the ocean, four monstrous forms emerge, and *there* appears the throne of the Ancient of Days, with all its appurtenances of majesty and insignia of justice. Empires, religions, the history of time, the opening gateways of eternity, are all spanned by those dreams. No wonder that monarchs sprang up trembling and troubled from their sight, and that one of them changed the countenance of the prophet, as years of anguish could not have done.

They are recounted in language grave, solemn, serene. The poetry of Daniel lies rather in the objects presented than in the figures or the language of the description. The vehemence, pathos, or fury, which, in various measures, characterized his brethren, are not found in him. A calm, uniform dignity distinguishes all his actions and words. It forsakes not his brow even while he is astonished for one hour in the presence of the monarch. It enters with him as he enters, awful in holiness, into the hall of Belshazzar's feast. It sits over him in the lion's den, like a canopy of state; and it sustains his style to its usual even exalted pitch in describing the session of the Ancient of Days, and the fiery stream which goes forth before him.

Besides those dreams, there are interspersed incidents of the most romantic and poetical character. Indeed, Daniel is the most romantic book of Scripture. There is the burning, fiery furnace, with the *fourth* Man walking through it, where three only had been cast in; there is the story of Nebuchadnezzar, driven from men, but restored again to his kingdom, and becoming an humble worshiper of the God of heaven; there is the hall of Belshazzar, with the armless hand and unread letters burning from the wall; and there is the figure of Daniel in the den, swaying the lions by his eye, and his holiness—emblem of a divine philosophy—soothing the savage passions of clay.

Perhaps, after all, the great grandeur of Daniel's prophecy arises from its frequent glimpses of the coming One. Over all

the wondrous emblems and colossal confusions of his visions, there is seen slowly, yet triumphantly, rising, one head and form—the form of a man, the head of a prince. It is the Messiah painting himself upon the sky of the future. This vision at once interpenetrates and overtops all the rest. Gathering from former prophets the separate rays of his glory which they saw, Daniel forms them into one kingly shape: this shape he brings before the Ancient of Days—to him assigns the task of defending the holy people—at his feet lays the keys of universal empire, and leaves him judging the quick and the dead. To Daniel, it was permitted to bring forth the first full birth of that great thought, which has ever since been the life of the church and the hope of the world.

And now, too, must this dignified counselor, this fearless saint, this ardent patriot, this blameless man, this magnificent dreamer, pass away from our page. He was certainly one of the most admirable of Scripture worthies. His character was formed in youth; it was retained in defiance of the seductions and of the terrors of a court. His genius, furnished with every advantage of education, and every variety of Pagan learning, was consecrated to God; the window of his prophecy, like that of his chamber, stood open toward Jerusalem. Over his death, as over that of the former three, there hangs a cloud of darkness. The deaths of the patriarchs and the kings are recorded, but the prophets drop suddenly from their airy summits, and we see and hear of them no more. Was Isaiah sawn asunder? We can not tell. Did Jeremiah perish a martyr in Egypt? We can not tell. Did Ezekiel die in youth, crucified on the fiery cross of his own temperament? We can not tell. And how came Daniel, the prince of dreamers, to his end? Did he, old and full of honors, die amid some happy Sabbath dream? Or did he depart, turning his eyes through his open window toward that beloved city where the hammers of reconstruction were already resounding? We can not tell. No matter: the messages are with us, while the men are away; the messages are certain, while the fate of the men is wrapt in doubt. This

is in fine keeping with the severe reserve of Scripture, and with the character of its writers. Munificent and modest benefactors, they knocked at the door of the human family at night, threw in inestimable wealth, fled, and the sound of their feet, dying away in the distance, is all the tidings they have given of themselves.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MINOR PROPHETS.

Beside the "giant angels" of Hebrew song, appears a series of "stripling cherubs," who are commonly called the minor prophets. They inherit this name, because some, though by no means all of them, flourished at a later date than the others—because their prophecies are shorter—because their genius was of a humbler order, although still that order was high—and because, while their genuineness and inspiration are conceded, they have never bulked so largely in the eye of the Church. If the constellation of large stars described in the former chapter may be compared to the cross of the south, this now in sight reminds us of the Pleiades: it is a mass of minute particles of glory, which may be somewhat difficult to divide asunder.

These smaller predictions have all a fragmentary character, and a great occasional obscurity, which has annoyed translators and verbal critics. What is written in brief space is generally written in brief time; and what is written rapidly is often full of rude boldness, abrupt transitions, and violent inversions. Hence, too, a difficulty which touches our province more closely, the difficulty of defining the peculiarity of each of the prophets. They have left only footprints on that dim old Hebrew soil, and from these we must gather their strength, age, and size. Cuvier's task of inferring a mastodon from a bone, here requires renewal. The very tread, indeed, of some animals, bewrays them; but then, that is either gigantic, as the trample of elephants, or peculiar, as the mark which a rare and solitary bird

leaves upon the sand or snow. But here, many rare and solitary birds have left their prints, close beside each other, and how to distinguish between them?

The order in which the minor prophets appear in our version is not the correct one. We prefer that of Dr. Newcome, who places them according to the respective dates of their lives and predictions. According to his arrangement, the first is

JONAH.

All known about this prophet, besides what is told us in his book, is simply that he lived in or before the reign of Jeroboam the Second, and was born in Gath-hepher, in the tribe of Zebulun.

The story of Jonah, wondrous as it is, seems, like that of Cambuscan and Christabel, only "half told." It breaks off so abruptly, that you almost fancy that a part had been torn away from the close. "Jonah" possesses little pure poetry. That song of deliverance, said, by some absurd mistake of transcribers, to have issued from the whale's belly, instead of, as its every word imports, being sung upon the shore, is the only specimen of the prophet's genius. Although not uttered, it was perhaps conceived in the strangest prison where man ever breathed, fitly called the "belly of hell" (or the grave), where a deep within a deep, a ward within the "innermost main," confined the body without crushing the spirit of the fugitive prophet. It is a sigh of the sea—a "voice from the deeps," audible to this hour. The most expressive word, perhaps, in it all, is the pronoun "thy"—"thy billows and thy waves have passed over me." Think of God's ocean being felt as all pressing against that living dungeon, and demanding, in the thunder of all its surges, the fugitive of Tarshish, and yet, after exciting unspeakable terror and remorse, demanding him in vain! With what a complicated feeling of thankfulness and of reflex terror, he seems to have regarded his danger and his deliverance! And how the strange shrine he had found for groans unheard, vows

unwitnessed, and prayers broken by the lashing of the monster's tail, or by the grinding of his teeth, suggests the far off temple, the privileges of which he had never so much valued, as now, when, seen from the "belly of hell," it seemed the very gate of heaven!

But the poetry of the book of Jonah is not confined to this little strain. Every thing about it

> "Suffers a sea change,
> Into something rich and strange."

There is, first, the abrupt call to the Jewish prophet, to repair alone, and confront that great city, the name of which was a terror in his native land. It was a task which might have blanched the cheek of Isaiah, and chilled the blood of Ezekiel. They stood afar off as they predicted the destruction and torment of Israel's enemies; but Jonah must draw near, and encounter fierce looks of hatred, if not imprisonment and death. And yet, it was not without a severe struggle that he determined to disobey, for hitherto he had been a faithful servant of God. But, perhaps, some misbegotten dream had crossed his couch, stunned his soul with the noises of Nineveh, lost him amid its vast expanse, terrified him with its seas of faces, and so shaken his courage, that the next day he arose and fled from the breath of the Lord, crying out, If the semblance be so dreadful, what must be the reality? And westward to Joppa, looking not behind him, ran Jonah. While Balaam was the first impious prophet on record, Jonah is the first temporizer and trifler with the gift and mission of God. Irritable in disposition, perhaps indolent, perhaps self-seeking, certainly timid, he permits his temperament to triumph over his inspiration. It is the tale of thousands, who from the voice of the Lord which surrounds them like an eddying wind, and says, "Onward to duty, to danger, to glory, and immortality," flee to the Tarshish of pleasure or to that of business which is not theirs, or to that of selfish inaction, or to that of a not less selfish despair. It is well for them if a storm disturb their course, and drive them

into the true port, as poverty did to Johnson, and as misery to Cowper; but more frequently—

> "As they drift upon their path,
> There is silence deep as death"—

silence amid which their last plunge in the dead sea of oblivion, and their last drowning gurgle, become audible, as thunder on the summer deep.

We have, as the next scene in this singular history, Jonah gone down into the ship, and sunk in sleep. This was no proof of insensibility. Sleep often says to the eyes of the happy, "Burn on, through midnight, like the stars; ye have no need of me;" but to those of the wretched, "I will fold you in my mantle, and bury you in sweet oblivion till the morning come." In certain states of desolation, there lies a power which draws down irresistibly the coverlet of sleep. Not in the fullness of security, but of insecurity; not in perfect peace, but in desperate recklessness, Jonah was overpowered by slumber. He slept, but the sea did not. The sight of a slumbering sinner can awake the universe. But the rocking ship, the roaring sea, and the clamorous sailors, only confirmed the slumber of the prophet—even as the dead in the center of the city seem to sleep more soundly than in the country—who hears of *their* apparitions? Roused he is at last by the master, who is more terrified at his unnatural sleep, than at the sea's wild vigil. "What meanest thou, O sleeper; arise, call upon thy God, if so be that thy God will think of us, that we perish not." The God of the fugitive and slumbering Jonah is felt after all to be their safety, and in awakening the prophet, they feel as if they were awakening his Deity. He had an angry God, but they had none.

How different the sleep of Jonah from the sleep of Jesus on the lake of Galilee! The one is the sleep of desperation, the other of peace; the one that of the criminal, the other of the child; the one that of God's fugitive, the other of his favorite; the darkness over the head of the one is the frown of anger;

the other the mask upon the forehead of love! But each is the center of his several ship—each, in different ways, is the cause of the storm; in each, in different ways, lies the help of the vessel; each must awake—the criminal to lighten the ship of his burden; the Son to rebuke the winds and waves, and produce immediately a great calm.

The moment Jonah entered the ship, instinct probably told the sailors that all was not right with him. The fugitive from God carries about him as distinct marks as the fugitive from man. He, too, has the restless motion, the unhappy eye, the unaccountable agitation, the mutilated or the melancholy repose. He, too, has the "Avenger of blood" behind him. Who has not witnessed such God-chased men, fleeing from a great purpose of intellect, a high ideal of life, noble prospects—from their happiness itself—and the faster they fled, the more lamentable become the chase? And who has not felt, too, that the place where such recreants were was dangerous, since they had become as a "rolling thing before the whirlwind" of divine wrath? And what inscription can be conceived more painful than that which must be sculptured upon the sepulchers of such —"Fallen from a great hope?" Jonah had betrayed his secret, by words as well as by looks. "He had *told* them that he had fled from the presence of the Lord." And after his lot is drawn, he proffers himself willingly to the sacrifice, for his conscience had awaked with him, and he began to fear the roused sea less, than to remain in the midst of a drowning ship and a desperate crew. It was better to "fall into the hands of God than of men." And so soon as the victim, who had been demanded by all those waves, small and great, shrieking or sunk, clear-crashing or hoarse, was yielded to their fury, a sullen growl of satisfaction first, then a loud signal for retreat, and, lastly, a whisper commanding universal silence, seem to testify that the sacrifice is accepted, the ship safe, and Jonah at the mercy of the deep. Even so when depart the self-stunted great, or the inconsistent and undeveloped good, man and na-

ture seem to say, half in sorrow, and half in gladness, but wholly in submission, "It is well."

But Jonah must not yet depart; he had yet work to do, sufferings to bear, sins to contract, a name of checkered interest to leave to the world. "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." As a "creature of the great calm," which was suddenly produced on the sea, there appeared, emerging from the lowermost deep, and attracted, it might be, by the wondrous silence which had followed the wondrous storm, an enormous fish, which swallowed the prophet, and descended with him into the sea again. We do not seek to prove or to commend this incident to the logical intellect or the sensuous apprehension; we look at it ourselves, and show it to others, in the light of *faith*. Nor let any one think himself of superior understanding, because he disbelieves it. If it had been a foolish legend, why have so many self-conceited fools rejected it; and why has it been believed by Milton, by Newton, and by "him who spake as never man spake?" As it is, this great fish doth show its back, "most dolphin-like," above the waves, and floats at once an emblem of God's forbearance to his feeble and fugitive ones, and of the faithfulness of his promise to his own buried son—"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

After being thrown out on the shore nearest Assyria, and singing his song of thanksgiving, Jonah, thus strangely recalled to his post, is urged again by the word of the Lord to enter Nineveh. A "dreadful sound," the sound of the sea, is in his ears, repeating the call. Alone, and unnoticed in a crowd composed of the confluence of all nations, he enters the capital of the East. After, perhaps, a short silence, the silence of wonder at the sight of that living ocean, he raises his voice. At first, feeble, tremulous, scarcely heard, it is swollen by every tributary street, as he passes, into a loud imperious sound, which all the cries of Nineveh are unable to drown. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." It is but a simple sentence,

uttered again and again, in terms unvaried. Its tones, as well as its terms, are the same; it is a deep monotony, as if learned from a dying wave. Its effect is aided, too, by the appearance of the prophet. Haggard by watchfulness, soiled by travel, "bearded like the pard," with a wild hungry fire in his eye, he seems hardly a being of this earth. Nineveh is smitten to the heart. Ere he has pierced one third of it, it capitulates to the message, the voice, and the figure of this stranger. The king proclaims a fast, and all, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. And still on amid these trembling, fasting, and sackcloth-clad multitudes, slowly and steadfastly moves the solitary man, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, but uttering, in the same unmitigated tone, the same incessant cry, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

We have here a striking proof of the power which units, when placed on the right side—that of God and truth—usually exert over the masses of men. As the figure one is to the ciphers, few or many, which range after it, so is the hero, the saint, the poet, the prophet, and the sage, to their species. One man enters, thirty-four years ago, the Western Metropolis of Scotland; sits quietly down in a plain house, in the north-west suburb, and writes sermons, which speedily change his pulpit into a battery, and memorize every Sabbath by a moral thunder-storm. Private as pestilence, comes another, five years later, into London, and his wild cry, lonely, at first, as that of John's in the desert, at last startles the press, the parliament, the court, the country without, the throne within, and it is felt that the one man has conquered the two millions. Nay, was there not, two thousand years ago, from an obscure mount in Galilee, heard a voice, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" and has not that voice, though clouded by opposition, choked in blood, crushed under the gravestone, at length commanded the attention, if not yet the obedience of the world? Let no one say in despair, "I am but one;" in his unity, as in the unity of a sword, lies his

might—if his metal be true, his singleness is strength—he may be multiplied, indeed, but he can not be divided. Minorities, and minorities of one, generally do the real work of mankind.

The last scene of Jonah's history partakes of the same marvelous character with the rest. God determines to spare the city, at its crying. Jonah is angry. His occupation is gone—his character for veracity is impeached—he has become a false prophet—better have been rolling in the deep still, than to face the people of Nineveh when the forty days are past. He is angry, and he wishes to die—to die, because millions are not!

Expecting the destruction of the city by earthquake or flame from heaven, he had gone out from it, and erected a booth or shelter, to screen his head from the sun; and he is there when he hears of the respite granted to the city. A fiercer fire than the sun's is now kindled in his heart; and, mingling with the heat which the booth imperfectly alleviates, it drives him almost to frenzy. He assails Omnipotence with savage irony. In answer, God prepares a large gourd, or species of palm, which springs up like an exhalation, and steeps his head with grateful coolness. Jonah is glad of it; it somewhat mollifies his indignant feelings, and under its shadow he sinks into repose. He awakes; the morning has risen like a furnace, but the gourd is withered; a worm has destroyed it, its cool shade is gone, and the arid leaves seem of fire, as they bend above his head, in a vehement but dry east wind which has sprung up. He faints, partly in pain, and partly in sorrow because of the green and beautiful plant, and renews, in bitterer accents, his yesterday's cry, "It were better for me to die than to live." Slowly there drop down upon him, from heaven, the words, "Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd?" and he answers, in the quick accents of despite and fury, "I do well to be angry, even unto death! Be angry, yea, I could die for my gourd." "Then, said the Lord, thou hast had pity on the plant, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow, which in a night rose, and in a night perished (which

was not thine, and which only for a few hours was with thee) And should not I have mercy on that great city, Nineveh, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons, who can not discern between their right hand and left hand (innocent as the gourd itself!), and also much cattle (poor dumb ones)!" And there, to the imagination, still sits the stunned and downcast prophet, the great city in sight, and shining in the sun—the low of hundreds of cattle in his ears—the bitter wind in his eyes and in his hair—disappointment and chagrin in his heart—and, hanging over his naked head, the fragments of the withered plant. Who would care to go and to sit down along with him?

And yet not a few *have* gone, and sat beside Jonah under that shade of tattered fire! The fierce, hopeless infidel, who would like Cain kill his brother, because he can not comprehend his God; the dogmatist, who has learned his "lesson of despair" so thoroughly, that the ease with which he recites it seems a voucher for its truth; the gloomy Christian, who lingers many a needless hour around the skirts of Sinai, instead of seeing its summits sinking afar off in the distance; the victim of vanity and disappointment, who has confounded his voice and identified its rejection, with the voice and the rejection of God; the misanthrope, who says, "Would that all men were liars;" and the fanatic, who grieves that the heavens do not respond to his vindictive feelings, and leave him and his party standing alone in the solitude which the race has left; such, and others, have partaken of the momentary madness, and shared in the dreary shelter of the prophet.

He, we trust, arose from under the gourd, and humbled, melted, instructed, resumed the grand functions of his office. It is of comparatively little moment whether he did or not, as the principles inscribed on his prophecy remain in any case the same. These are, first, to fly from duty is to fly to danger; secondly, deliverance from danger often conducts to new and tenfold perils, and involves tenfold responsibilities; thirdly, a duty delayed is a duty doubled; fourthly, the one voice of an

earnest man is a match for millions; fifthly, an error in the truest prophet can degrade his character, and cast a shade of doubt upon his name; and sixthly, God would rather lower the good report of any of his messengers, than endanger one syllable of his own recorded name, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to anger."

AMOS.

This prophet lived nearly 800 years before Christ. While employed as an herdsman, he was summoned to lift up his voice against Israel. Driven from Bethel, by the calumnies of the idolatrous priest Amaziah, he fled to Tekoah, a small town ten miles south of Jerusalem; and afterward, we hear of him no more.

As Burns among the poets, is Amos among the prophets. Few, indeed, of that company could be called cultured; but Amos was especially destitute of training. He comes straight from the cattle-stall and the solitary pasture. A strong bull of Bashan, he leaps in, "two years before the earthquake," and bellows out, "The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." He turns his first fury upon the neighboring idolatrous nations; and short, deep, decisive, are the crashes of his thunder against Damascus, Gaza, Tyrus, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. His burdens are only words; but they are words of doom. A nation falls in every sentence. "I will send a fire into the house of Hazael—a fire on the wall of Gaza—a fire on the palaces of Tyrus—a fire upon Teman—a fire in the wall of Rabbah." And having flung those forked flashes at the neighboring nations, he pours out on Judah and Israel his full and overflowing ire. Israel, at the time of Amos, had partially recovered its ancient possessions and grandeur, and more than its ancient pride, injustice, and luxury. It required to be startled from its selfish dream, by the rude cries of this holy herdsman, whose utterances are abrupt, unvaried, and laconic, as midnight alarms of fire. Ceremony there is none with Amos. Nor, like

some of his brethren, does he ever indulge in long and swelling passages, whether of allegory or description. His prophecy is principally composed of short threatenings, short prayers, sudden exclamations, and, above all, startling questions. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." "Woe unto you who desire the day of the Lord! that day is darkness and not light." "I hate and despise your feast-days." "Take away from me the noise of your songs." "In all vineyards shall be wailing, for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord." But interrogation is his power. He is like a stranger from the country asking his way through a city. But his questions are rather those of indignation than of surprise. Thus he sounds on his wild uneven path:—"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" "The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" "Shall horses run upon the rock?" "Are ye not as the children of Ethiopia unto me, O children of Israel, saith the Lord God?"

The imagery of Amos is generally pastoral, and comes in, like a cool breeze from Bashan, to temper the ardor of his prophetic vein. The bird, the lion from whose mouth the shepherd rescues two legs or the piece of an ear, the bear meeting the man who has escaped the lion, the kine of Bashan, the vineyards where he had often gathered fruit, the seven stars and Orion which he had often watched from his midnight fields, the plowman overtaking the reaper, and the gatherer of grapes, the sower of seed—proclaim his original habits and associations. Two of the principal types employed are selected from the scenery of the country—the grasshoppers, in the 7th, and the basket of summer-fruit, in the 8th chapter. In like manner, the future prosperity of Israel is represented by a rural image. "I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof, and they shall make gardens, and eat the fruit of them."

There are besides, in Amos, certain brief and bold sublimities, which class his genius with that of the best of the lesser pro-

phets. Such, in the 9th chapter, is the vision of the Lord standing upon the altar, and proclaiming the inextricable dilemmas into which Israel's crimes had led them. In all Scripture occur no more powerful antitheses than the following:—"He that fleeth of them shall not flee away; he that escapeth of them shall not escape (into safety). If they dig down into Sheol, thence shall mine hand take them. If they climb up into heaven, then shall I bring them down. If they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search for, and thence will I take them out. And if they hide themselves from mine eyes, in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them. If they go into captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword, and it shall slay them, and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good." How the divine omnipresence here rolls itself around the victims of the divine anger! In the 139th Psalm, the poet wishes to escape from the Spirit of God, as from a *thought* too strange and overwhelming for him; but here, Israel would seek escape from him, as he might from the center of a forest of fire, but is doomed forever to seek it in vain. An historian has given an animated description of the impossibility of escape which beset the steps of the fugitive from the power of the Roman Emperor. If he crossed the Alps, that power was before him; if he crossed the ocean, it was waiting for him on the shore; and the tropic or the frigid zone was equally unable to hide him from its Briarean grasp. Still, there remained for him an avenue of deliverance. He might plunge into the sea, or turn his sword against his own bowels, or pledge his oppressor in poison. But for the object of the just vengeance of Jehovah, there lay no such way of escape; he could not thus set his foe at defiance. The sea would say, "It is not in me;" Sheol (or Hades) would re-echo the cry; if he dropped into the arms of death, they would but hand him into those of Death's King; and if he sought to mount to heaven, this were to flee into the metropolis of his foe. Other worlds were barred against him; or even were their barriers broken,

this were only to take down the palisades which blocked the way of his perdition. The Universe was transfigured into a menacing shape, fronting the criminal with a face of fire, and stretching out on all sides its myriad starry hands, to arrest his retreat, or to shed down dismay upon his guilty soul.

Thus, too, we may, in perfect harmony with the spirit of Amos, adumbrate not only the idea of God's personal presence, but of the presence of his laws. These, as well as his eye, never slumber, and never sleep: they flame on, like chariot lamps, through the thickest darkness; they people the remotest solitudes, and the heather bloom which drops there, and the little stream which gurgles—the one drops, and the other gurgles to their severe melody. The thought of this banishes solitude from the creation. "How can I be alone, when the Father is with me," and when all the principles which regulate suns, are here—on this quaking bog, this peak of snow, this crag of ocean? Nay, these omnipresent laws, in their moral form, are found in far drearier and darker places than the dens of serpents or of lions. They exist in evil hearts, in polluted consciences, in the abodes of uttermost infamy. Innocent as the water and the bread which are there, pure as the light which shines there, yet terrible as the conscience which often there awakens, do the laws of God's moral government there stand, and exercise a real, a felt, though a disputed, sovereignty —the dawning of their full and final power. "Whither can men go from their presence?" It is not the spirit of earthly law which a great writer has so powerfully painted; it is the spirit of universal righteousness which invisibly thus hovers, and quells even those who doubt or disbelieve the righteous One. "Ascend we heaven, *they* are there," for it is these which constitute our entire knowledge of the stars; these bind all worlds into one; and he who has adequately ascertained the laws of his own fire, has only to blow its flame broader, to decipher the laws of the "burning, fiery furnace" of the midnight heavens. Ye silent, steadfast, perpetual principles, so slow, yet swift—so stern, yet merciful—so low, yet so loud in tone—so un

assuming, and so omnipotent—so simple in your roots, and so complicated in your branches—we might sing peans and build altars in your worship, were it not that we have been taught, and taught specially by those Hebrew poets, to see, behind and within you, one living spirit, God over all, blessed forever, your never-failing fountain, your ever-open ocean, and have been taught to sing—

> "Father of all, we bow to thee,
> Who dwell'st in heaven adored,
> But present still, through all thy works,
> The universal Lord."

Amos has had a singular destiny among his fellows. Many herdsmen tended cattle in Tekoah, or gathered fruit from its sycamore-trees, but on him alone lighted the spirit of inspiration. It came to him as, like Elisha, he was employed in his peaceful toil; it hurried him to duty and to danger; it made him a power among the moral princes of the land; it gave his name and his prophecy a place in an immortal volume; and from gathering sycamore fruit, it promoted him to stand below the "tree of life," to pluck from it, and to distribute to after-ages not a few clusters, as fair as they are nutritious, of its celestial fruit. All honor to the bold herdsman of Tekoah! Nor can we close, without alluding again to the unhappy poet whose name we coupled with his at the beginning—who left the plow, not at the voice of a divine, but of an earthly impulse—whose snatches of truth, and wisdom, and virtuous sentiment, were neutralized by counter strains of coarse and ribald debauchery—who struggled all his life between light, which amounted to noon, and darkness, which was midnight—who tore and tarnished with his own hand the garland of beauty he had woven for the brow of his native land—whose name, broader in his country's literature than that of Amos in his, is broadened by the blots which surrounded, as well as by the beauties which adorned it—and of whom, much as we admire his genius and the many manly qualities of his character, we are prone to say,

Pity for his own sake and his country's, that he had not tarried "behind his plow on the mountain-side," for then, if his "glory" had been less, his "joy" had been greater, or, if ruined, he at least had "fallen alone in his iniquity."

HOSEA.

This prophet seems to have uttered his predictions seven or eight hundred years before Christ. He was a son of Beeri, and lived in Samaria. He was cotemporary with Isaiah, and prophesied nearly at the same time with Joel. He is "placed," says an eminent critic, "first among the twelve minor prophets, probably because of the peculiarly national character which belongs to his oracles."

Hosea is the first of the prophets who confines his ire within the circle of his own country; not a drop spills beyond. One thought fills his whole soul and prophecy—the thought of Israel and Judah's estrangement from God, and how they may be restored. This occupies him like a passion, and, like all great passions, refuses to be divided. He broods, he yearns, his "bowels sound like a harp" over his native land. To her, his genius is consecrated "a whole burnt-offering"—to her, his domestic happiness is surrendered in the unparalleled sacrifice of the first chapter. And how his heart tosses to and fro, between stern and soft emotions, toward Ephraim, as between conflicting winds! At one time, he is to be as a "lion unto Ephraim; he is to tear, and to go away;" but again he cries out—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not turn to destroy Ephraim utterly." Indeed, the great interest of the book springs from the vibrations of the balance in which the nation hangs, rising now high as heaven, and now sinking as low as hell, till at last it settles into the calm, bright equilibrium in which the last beautiful chapter leaves it. The prophecy may be compared to a water-fall which tears and bruises its way, amid spray and rainbows, through a dark gulley, and gains, with difficulty, a placid pool

at the base, where it sleeps a sleep like the first sleep after torture.

Abruptness characterizes Hosea as well as Amos; but, while in Amos it is the fruit of haste and rural habit, in Hosea it springs from his impassioned earnestness. He is not only full, but choked at times with the fury of the Lord. Hence his broken metaphors; his sentences begun, but never ended; his irregular rhythm; his peculiar idioms; the hurry with which he leaps from topic to topic, from feeling to feeling, and from one form of speech to another. The flowers he plucks are very beautiful, but seem to be snatched without selection, and almost without perception of their beauty, as he pursues his rapid way. A sublime incoherence distinguishes his prophecy even more than those of the other prophets. His passages and sentences have only the unity of earnestness, such a unity as the wind gives to the disconnected trees of the forest. From this, and his other peculiarities, arises a great and frequent obscurity. He is like a man bursting through a deep wood; this moment he is lost behind a tree trunk, and the next he emerges into the open space. But, perhaps, none of the prophets has, within the same compass, included such a multitude of short, memorable, and figurative sentences. His coin is minute in size, but at once precious and abundant.

What texts for texts are the following:—"My people are destroyed, or cut off for lack of knowledge." "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." "O, Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew." "Ephraim is a cake not turned." "Gray hairs are sprinkled or dispersed upon him, and he knoweth it not." "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. As for Samaria, her king is cut off like foam upon the water." "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us." "I drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." "I gave them a king in mine anger, and I will take him away in my wrath." "O, death, where is thy triumph? O, grave, where thy destruction?" "I will be as

the dew unto Israel." "What hath Ephraim any more to do with idols?" We see many of our readers starting at the sight of those old familiar faces, which have so often shone on them, in pulpits, and from books, but which they have never traced till now to Hosea's rugged page. He is, we fear, the least read of all the prophets.

And yet, surely, if the beginning of his prediction somewhat repel, the close of it should enchain every reader. It is the sweetest, roundest, most unexpected, of the prophetic perorations. All his woes, warnings, struggles, hard obscurities, and harsh ellipses and transitions, are melted down in a strain of music, partly pensive, and partly joyous, fresh as if it rose from earth, and aerial as if it descended from heaven. The controversies of the book are now ended; its contradictions reconciled —the balance sleeps in still light; God and his people are at length made one, through the gracious medium of pardoning love; the ornaments lavished on the bridal might befit that future and final "bridal of the earth and sky," of which it is the type and the pledge; and the music might be that which shall salute the "Lamb's wife." Hear a part of it. "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them. I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall blossom as the lily, he shall strike his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, his glory shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that sit under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as corn; they shall break forth as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

Softest of all droppings, are the last droppings from a thunder-cloud, which the sun has brightened, and the rainbow bound. Smoothest of all leaves, are the "high leaves" upon the holly-tree. And soft and smooth as these droppings and leaves, are the last words of the stern Hosea, whom otherwise we might have called a half Ezekiel, possessing his passion and vehemence; while Zechariah shall reflect the shadowy portion of his orb, and be nearly as mystic, typical, and unsearchable in manner and in meaning, as the son of Buzi.

JOEL

Stands fourth in the catalogue of the minor bards. Nothing whatever is known of him, except that he seems to have been of the tribe of Judah, and that he prophesied between seven and eight hundred years before Christ.

Gloomy grandeur is this bard's style; desolation, mourning, and woe, are the substance of his prophecy. Its hero is the locust, winging his way to the fields predestined for his ravages. We can suppose Joel, the pale yet bold rider of one of those shapes in the Revelations, "Locusts like unto horses prepared unto battle; on their heads crowns of gold, their faces as the faces of men, their hair as the hair of women, their teeth as the teeth of lions, with breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings as the sound of many horses and chariots running to battle." And hark! how he spurs, instead of restraining, his terrible courser, crying out, "The day of Jehovah cometh; it is near. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of cloud and of thick darkness. As the dusk before the dawn spread upon the mountains, cometh a great people and a strong; there hath never been the like of old, nor shall be any more forever. A fire devoureth before them, and behind a flame consumeth; the land before them is as the Garden of Eden, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them." So black and broad, as if cast from the shadow of a fallen angel's wings, is the ruin predicted by Joel.

These locusts have a king and a leader, and, in daring consistency with his own and his country's genius, he constitutes that leader the Lord. They are his "great camp," his "army," they march at his command straightforward; with them he darkens the face of the earth, and with them, "warping on the eastern wind," he bedims the sun and the stars. These innumerous, incessant, and irresistible insects form the lowest, but not the least terrible of those incarnations of God, which the imagination of the Jew delighted to create and the song of the prophet to describe. *Now*, the philosopher seldom personifies

even the universe; 'tis but a great and glorious *It;* but then each beautiful, or dire, or strange shape passing over the earth, or through the heavens—the shower, the rainbow, the whirlwind, the locust-troop, the mildew, the blight—was God's movable tent, the place where, for a season, his honor, his beauty, his strength, and his justice dwelt, the tenant not degraded, and inconceivable dignity being added to the abode.

Promises of physical plenty alternate, in Joel, with threatenings of physical destruction. And rich are the years of plenty which he predicts to succeed those of famine. "O ye children of Zion, be glad in Jehovah your God; for he giveth you the former rain in measure, and will cause the former and the latter rain to come down on you as aforetime. And the floor shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years which the locusts have eaten—my great army which I have sent unto you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied; and shall praise the name of Jehovah your God." Such smooth and lovely strains seem less congenial, however, to Joel's genius than is the progress of the destroyers. Into that he throws his whole soul. The "sheaf" of plenty he bears artistically and well; but he becomes the "locust," as he leads him forth to his dark and silent battle.

But there are still nobler passages than this in Joel's prophecy. As the blackness of a cloud of doom to that of a swarm of locusts, is Joel's description of the one to his description of the other. There are two or three passages in his prophecy which, like the dove of the deluge, "can find no rest for the sole of their feet," till they reach the cliffs of final judgment. Touch, indeed, one does, for a moment, upon the roof of that "one place," where Peter, inflamed beneath the fiery Pentecost, is preaching to the disciples; but ere the speaker has closed, he has risen and soared away toward a higher house, and a far distant age. Another and fuller accomplishment there must be for the words, "I will show wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be

turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come." Nothing, save the great last day, can fill up the entire sphere of this description. That there is what we may call a strange and mysterious sympathy between the various lines of the divine procedure—that when God's providence smiles, his works in nature often return smile for smile—and that when his moral procedure is frowning, his material framework becomes cloudy, threatening, and abnormal, too, seems proved by facts, as well as consistent with the dictates of true philosophy; for although there be those who stand cowering *below* such singular correspondences with the vulgar, and those who stand *above* them, like angelic creatures, and those who stand *apart* from them, as they do from all strange and beautiful phenomena, like the minions of mathematics and the slaves to a shallow logic, there may be those who can stand on their level and *beside* them, and see all God's works reflecting, and hear them responding to, and feel them sympathizing with, each other. And that, when God shall close our present economy, and introduce his nobler and his last, this may be announced in the aspects of nature, as well as of society—that the heaven may blush, and the earth tremble, before the face of their king—that there shall be visible signs and wonders—seems at once philosophically likely, and Scripturally certain. An earthquake shook the cross, darkness bathed the brow of the crucified, the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened. Jerusalem, ere its fall, was not only compassed, but canopied, with armies. A little time before the French Revolution there is peace on earth; is there peace in heaven? No; night after night, the sky is bathed in blood—blood finding a fearful comment in the wars which followed, in which France alone counted her five millions of slain—a "sign of the times," which did not escape the eye of Cowper, as his "Task" testifies. Since then, once and again, pestilence and civil convulsion have danced down together their dance of death, and their ball-room has been lighted up by meteors, which science knew not, nor could explain. But what imagination can conceive of those appear-

ances which shall precede or accompany the coming of God's Son, and the establishment of his kingdom? Let the pictures, by Joel, by John, and, at a far off distance, by Pollok, remain as alone approximating to the sublimity of those rehearsals of doom. Be it that they are from the pencils of poets, surely poets are fitting heralds to proclaim the rising of those two new poems of God—the New Heaven, and the New Earth and is not the language of one of themselves as true as it is striking—

> "A terrible sagacity informs
> The poet's heart, he looks to distant storms,
> He hears the thunder, ere the tempest lowers."

A kindred event in the future lies obscurely upon Joel's page. It is the "last conflict of great principles." That this is the burden of the 3d chapter, it seems difficult to deny. Through its fluctuating mist, there is dim-discovered the outline of a battle-field, where a cause—the cause of the world—is to be fought, fought finally, and to the watchword, "Victory or death." Nothing can be more magnificent than the picture, colored though it be by Jewish associations and images. The object of the fight is the restoration of Judah to its former freedom and power. For this, have its scattered members been gathered, organized, and brought back to their own land. God has gathered them, but he has also, for purposes of his own, to use prophetic language, "hissed" for their enemies, from all nations, to oppose them on the threshold of their triumph. The valley of decision or excision is that of Jehoshaphat, the deep glen lying between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, and which is watered by the brook Kedron. There "multitudes, multitudes," are convened for the final issue. The field has been darkened, and over those multitudes a canopy expands, unlighted by sun, moon, or stars. Under this black sky, the sea of heathen fury and numbers is advancing, and the people of God are, in deep suspense and silence, awaiting its first breaking billow. The contest at last begins, when lo! there is a

glare on Olivet, which shows also the whole expanse of Jehoshaphat's valley, and also the faces of the foemen, as they draw nigh; and hark! there is a voice from Zion which shakes earth and heaven, and tells that the delivery is near; and then, between Olivet and Jerusalem, and hanging high over the narrow vale, appears the Lord himself, "the hope of his people, and the stronghold of the children of Israel." And as the result of this sudden intervention, when the fight is decided, "the mountains drop down sweet wine, the hills flow with milk, the torrents of Judah flow with water, a fountain comes forth from the House of Jehovah, and waters the valley of Shittim," and innumerable voices proclaim that henceforth the "Lord will dwell in," as he has delivered, Zion.

Was there ever preparation on a larger scale; suspense deeper; deliverance more sudden; or a catastrophe more sublime? We stay not now critically to inquire how much there is of what is literal, and how much of what is metaphorical, in this description. To tell accurately where, in prophetic language, the metaphor falls from around the fact, and the fact pierces the bud of the metaphor, is one of the most difficult of tasks; as difficult, almost, as to settle the border line between the body and the soul. But, apart from this, we think there is no candid reader of the close of Joel, but must be impressed with the reality of the contest recorded there, with its modern date, its awful breadth of field, its momentous and final character. It is, in all the extent of the words, that war of opinion so often partially predicted and partially fought. It is a contest between the real followers of Christ, out of every kindred, denomination, tongue, and people, and the open enemies and the pretended friends of his cause. It is a contest of which the materials are already being collected. It is a contest which, as it hurtles on, shall probably shake all churches to their foundations, and give a new and strange arrangement to all parties. It is a contest for which intelligent men and Christians should be preparing, not by shutting themselves up within the fastnesses of party, nor by strengthening more strongly the stakes

of a bygone implicit narrowness of creed, but by the exercise of a wise liberality, a cautious circumspection, and a manly courage, blended with candor, and by being prepared to sacrifice many an outpost, and relinquish many a false front of battle, provided they can save the citadel, and keep the banner of the cross flying, free and safe above it. It is a contest which may, in all probability, become at last more or less literal, as when did any great war of mind fail to dye its garments in blood. It is a contest of whose where and when we may not speak, since the strongest prophetic breath has not raised the mists which overhang the plain of Armageddon. It is a contest, finally, which promises to issue in a supernatural intervention, and over the smoke of its bloody and desperate battle-field, to show the crown of the coming of the Son of Man.

MICAH.

He is called the Morasthite, because born in Mareshah, a village in the south of the territory of Judah. He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. We find a remarkable allusion to him in the book of Jeremiah. That prophet had predicted the utter desolation of the temple and city of Jerusalem. The priests and prophets thereupon accused him to the princes and the people, as worthy to die, because he had prophesied against the city. The threat is about to be put in execution, when some of the elders rise up and adduce the case of Micah. "Micah, the Morasthite, prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. Did Hezekiah, king of Judah, and all Judah, put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls." Micah was pleaded as a precedent, nor was he pleaded in vain.

This prophet is noted principally for the condensation of his language, the rapidity of his transitions, the force and brevity of his pictures, the form of dialogue to which he often approaches, and for two or three splendid passages which tower above the rest of his prophecy, like cedars above the meaner trees. One of these records the sudden gleam of insight which showed him, in the future, Bethlehem-Ephratah sending out its illustrious progeny, one whose goings forth had been from of old, from the "Eternal obscure." How lovely those streams of prophetic illumination, which fall from afar, like autumn sunshine upon secret and lonely spots, and crown them with a glory unknown to themselves! Bethlehem becomes beautiful beyond itself, in the luster of the Savior's rising. Another, for moral grandeur, is almost unequaled in Scripture, and sounds like the knell of the ceremonial economy. "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the Most High God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will Jehovah be well pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Here the burden of the 50th Psalm is uttered more sententiously, although not with such awful accompaniments. Both announce the prospective arrival of a period, when the husk of type and statutory observance was to drop from around the fruit it had protected and concealed, when equity was to outsoar law, mercy to rejoice over sacrifice, and humility to take the room of ceremonial holiness —when that "which had decayed and waxed old was to vanish away."

In this liberal spirit, as well as in certain passages of Micah's prophecy, we descry the influence of the great orb which appeared above the horizon at the same time—Isaiah. The close of the 7th chapter is almost identical with a passage in Isaiah; but the main coincidence occurs in the 4th chapter. Critics

have doubted whether the opening of this was copied by Isaiah from Micah, or by Micah from the 2d chapter of Isaiah; or whether it were communicated by the Spirit separately to both. This is a matter of little moment; certainly the strain itself was worthy of repetition.

It is a vision of the future glories of the Church. The prophet finds an emblem of it in Mount Sion, or the mountain of the temple of the Lord. This was not remarkable for height. Far loftier mountains arose throughout Palestine. There were the mountains which stand alway about Jerusalem. There was Salmon, with its perpetual snow. There were the mountains of Gilboa, where Saul and Jonathan, who had been lovely in their lives, in their death were not divided. There was Carmel, shadowing the waters of the west, and covered, to its summit, with a robe of undying green. There was Tabor, rising, like an island, from the plain of Esdraelon, which lies like an ocean around it. And in the north, stood the great form of Lebanon, rising above the clouds, and covered with the cedars of God—

> "Whose head in wintry grandeur towers,
> And whitens with eternal sleet;
> While summer, in a vale of flowers,
> Is smiling rosy at his feet."

Compared to these and others, Mount Sion was but a little hill —a mere dot on the surface of the globe. But dearer it was than any or all of them to Micah's heart. And why? because it was the mountain of the Lord's house. No temple stood on Tabor; no incense streamed from Carmel; to Lebanon no tribes went up, nor sacrifices ascended from its cedarn summits. Sion alone represented the position of the Church—not to be compared in magnificence or in multitude of votaries with other systems, but possessing, in the presence of the Spirit of the Lord, a principle of divine life and an element of everlasting progress.

But the prophet has now a "vision of his own." Sion in his

dream, begins to stir, to move, to rise. It first surmounts the hills which are around Jerusalem; then rises higher than Carmel, that solitary mountain of the west; then overtops Tabor; and springs up, at last, as far above Lebanon as Lebanon was above the meaner hills of the land. It is established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and up to it he sees flocking all nations. It has become the center of the world. It gives law to every people and tongue. The Lord himself sits in the midst of it, distributing justice impartially to all near and far off. And around and within the shadow of his universal throne, the prophet beholds many hammering their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks—others sitting below their vine and fig-tree—and all calm, peaceful, and happy, under the solitary scepter of Jehovah.

Thus shaped itself on Micah's eye a prospect which must yet be transferred from his to the broad page of the world. Like Sion, the Church is, in one view, very small. Hindoos and Chinese speak of her as a low heresy, creeping about the mountains and marshes of Europe; and contrast her with their ancient and colossal establishments. Jews and Mohammedans deride her, as cemented by the blood of him that was crucified. And in one sense they are right in so judging; in another, they are fearfully mistaken. Christianity is nothing, except that it is divine—nothing, except that it comes from heaven—nothing, except that it is to cover the whole earth with its power and its praise. The arm of a prophet was just like any other human arm; it possessed precisely the same number of bones, sinews, muscles, and veins. And yet when raised to heaven, when electrified from above, it could divide the sea, raise the dead, and bring down fire from the clouds. So the true Church of Christ is just an assemblage of simple, humble, sincere men—that is all; but the Lord is on their side, and there we discern a source of energy, which shall yet shatter thrones, change the destiny of nations, and uplift, with resistless force, the mountain of the Lord's house above the mountains and above the hills.

This despised and struggling Church shall yet become universal. "All nations shall flow unto it." Those who wander on the boundless steeps of Tartary—those who shiver amid the eternal ice of Greenland—those who inhabit Africa, that continent of thirst—those who bask in the lovely regions of the South Sea—all, all are to flow to the mountain of the Lord. They are to "flow;" they are to come, not in drops, but with the rush and the thunder of mighty streams. "Nations are to be born in one day." A supernatural impulse is to be given to the Christian cause. Christ is again to be, as before, his own missionary. Blessed are the eyes which shall see this great gathering of the nations, and the ears which shall hear the sound thereof. Blessed above those born of woman, especially, the devoted men, who, after laboring in the field of the world, shall be rewarded, and at the same time astonished, by finding its harvest-home hastened, and the work which they had been pursuing, with strong crying and tears, done to their hands, done completely, and done from heaven. In *this* belief lies the hope and the help of the world. But for a divine intervention, we despair of the success of the good cause. Allow us this, and Christianity is sure of a triumph, as speedy as it shall be universal. On Sabbath, the 16th of May, 1836, we saw the sun seized on the very apex of his glory, as if by a black hand, and so darkened that only a thin round ring of light remained visible, and the chill of twilight came prematurely on. That mass of darkness within seemed the world lying in wickedness, and that thin round ring of light, the present progress of the Gospel in it. But not more certain were we then, that that thin round ring of light was yet to become the broad and blazing sun, than are we now, that through a divine interposal, but not otherwise, shall the "knowledge of the glory of the Lord cover the earth as the waters the sea."

With this coincides Micah's prophecy. From Sion, as of old, the law is to go forth; and the word of Jehovah issuing from Jerusalem seems to imply, that he himself is there to sit and judge and reign—his ancient oracle resuming its thunders, and

again to his feet the tribes going up. And the first, and one of the best fruits of his dominion is peace. "They learn war no more." Castles are dismantled, men of war plow the deep no longer, but are supplanted by the white sails of merchant vessels; soldiers no more parade the streets in their lothesome finery of blood; swords and spears are changed into instruments of husbandry, or, if preserved, are preserved in exhibitions, as monuments of the past folly and frenzy of mankind. (Perhaps a child finds the fragment of a rusty blade some day in a field, brings it in to his mother, asks her what it is, and the mother is unable to reply!) Peace, the cherub, waves her white wing, and murmurs her soft song of dovelike joy over a regenerated and united world.

All hail, ye "peaceful years!" Swift be your approach; soon may your great harbinger divide his clouds and come down; and soon may the inhabitants of a warless world have difficulty in crediting the records which tell of the wretchedness, the dispeace, the selfishness, and the madness of the past.

NAHUM.

Nahum was a native of Elkoshai, a village of Galilee, the ruins of which are said to have been distinctly visible in the fourth century.

Nahum's prophecy is not much longer than his history. It is the most magnificent shout ever uttered. Like a shout, it is short, but strong as the shout which brought down Jericho. The prophet stands—a century after Jonah—without the wall of Nineveh, and utters, in fierce and hasty language, his proclamation of its coming doom. No pause interrupts it; there is no change in its tone; it is a stern, one war-cry, and comes swelled by the echoes of the past. Nahum is an evening wolf, from the Lord, smelling the blood of the great city, and uttering a fearful and prolonged note—half of woe, and half of joy, which is softened by distance into music. How wondrous that one song should have survived such a city!

In a shout, you expect nothing but strength, monotony, and loudness. But Nahum's is the "shout of a king;" not merely majestical in tone, but rises, with splendid imagery and description. Nineveh must fall to regal music. It must go down amid pomp and poetry. Especially does the prophet kindle, as he pictures the pride, pomp, and circumstance of war. Tyrtæus and Korner, nay, Macaulay and Scott, are faint-hearted on the field of battle, compared to Nahum. He strikes his lyre with fingers dipped in blood. In him, a prophetic blends with a martial fire, like a stray sunbeam crowning and hallowing a conflagration. Hear Nineveh shaking in the breath of his terrible outcry—"Woe to the city of blood! She is all full of falsehood and violence. The prey departeth not. There is a sound of the whip, and a sound of the rattling wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the bounding chariots, and of the mounting horsemen. There, too, burns the flame of the sword, and the lightning of the spear, and a multitude of slain, and a heap of dead bodies, and there is no end to the carcasses—they stumble upon carcasses."

Nahum's prophecy possesses one poetical quality in perfection. That is concentration. He has but one object, one thought, one spirit, one tone. His book gathers like a "wal of fire" around the devoted city. He himself may be fitliest likened to that wild and naked prophet, who ran in incessant and narrowing circle about Jerusalem, and who, as he traced the invisible furrow of destruction around it, cried out, "Woe, woe, woe," till he sank down in death!

ZEPHANIAH.

His genealogy is more minutely marked than that of any of his brethren. He is the "son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah." While his genealogy is thus carefully preserved, none of the facts of his life are given. We know only that he was called to prophesy in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, the King of Judah. He was cotem-

13513

porary with Jeremiah, and, like him, "zealous to slaying" against the idols and idolatrous practices of his country.

Zephaniah is less distinguished than some of his brethren for any marked or prominent quality. He is not abrupt, like Hosea, gloomily-grand, like Joel, majestic, like Micah, impetuous, like Amos, or concentrated, like Nahum: he is rather a composite of many qualities, and a miniature of many prophetic writers. We have vehement denunciation of the sins of his own people; we have the dooms of idolatrous nations pronounced with all the force and fury of his office; we have pictures, startling for life and minuteness, of the varied classes and orders of offenders in Jerusalem—princes, judges, prophets, and priests; and we have bright promises, closing and crowning the whole. All these are uttered in a brief, but impressive and solemn style.

But why, is it asked, do these Hebrew prophets utter such terrible curses against heathen countries? Are they not harsh in themselves, and do they not augur a vindictive spirit on the part of their authors? We ask, in reply, first, were not those curses fulfilled? Were they uttered in impotent fury? Did they recoil upon the heads of those who uttered them? Did those ravens croak in vain? If not, is it not to be inferred that the rage they expressed was not their own; that they were, in a great measure, as ravens were supposed to be, instruments of a higher power, dark with the shadow of destiny? Evil wishes are proverbially powerless; the "threatened live long"—curses, like chickens, come home to roost. But their curses—the ruins of empires are smoking with them still. But, secondly, even if we grant that human emotions did to some extent mingle with those prophetic denunciations, yet these were by no means of a *personal* kind. Of what offense to Ezekiel had Tyre, or to Isaiah had Babylon, been guilty? Their ire was kindled on general and patriotic grounds. Thirdly, Let us remember that the prophets employed the language of poetry which is always in some degree that of exaggeration. Righteous indignation, when set to music, and floated on the breath of

song, must assume a higher and harsher tone; must ferment into fury, soar into hyperbolical invective, or, if it sink, sink into the undertone of irony, and yet remain righteous indignation still. Fourthly, As Coleridge has shown so well, to fuse indignation into poetic form, serves to carry off whatever of over-violence there had been in it: by aggravating, it relieves and lessens its fury. Fifthly, There is such a thing as noble rage; there are those who do well to be angry; there is anger which may lawfully tarry after the sun has gone down, and after the longest twilight has melted away; there is a severe and purged fire, not to feel which implies as deep a woe, to the subject, as to feel it inflicts upon the object. It is the sickly sentimentalism of a girl which shudders at such glorious frowns and fiery glances and deep thrilling accents, as robust virtue must sometimes use to quell vice, and audacity, and heartlessness, and hypocrisy, in a world rank with them all. There must be other sentences and songs at times than the perfumed pages of albums will endure, and cries may require to be raised which would jar on the ear of evening drawing-rooms. Such sentences and cries the mildest of men, nay, superhuman beings, have been forced to utter. Can any one wonder at Ezekiel's burdens, who has read the 23d chapter of Matthew? Dare any one accuse Isaiah of vindictive scorn to the fallen King of Babylon, who remembers the divine laughter described in the 2d Psalm, or the 1st chapter of Proverbs? It is very idle to proceed with Watts to reduce to a weak dilution the sterner Psalms. The spirit of Jude and 2d Peter is essentially the same with that of the 109th and 137th Psalms; and never be it forgotten, that the most fearful denunciations of sin, and pictures of future punishment in Scripture, come from the lips of Jesus and of the disciple whom he loved. It is in the New Testament, not the Old, that that sentence of direst and deepest import occurs, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Were, indeed, the theory of the Germans true, that those prophetic curses were uttered after the events predicted, we

should surrender them more readily to their censure, although, even in this case, there had been numerous palliations to plead for the prolonged exultation of a delivered race over foes so oppressive and formidable. But believing that Isaiah's burden of Babylon is of a somewhat different order from the prophecy of Capys, and that all the Scripture predictions implied foresight, and were the shadows of coming events, we are not disposed to gratify the skeptic by granting that one spark of infernal fire shone on those flaming altars of imprecation, although a shade of human feeling was perhaps inseparable from the bosoms of the priests, however purged and clean, who ministered around them.

HABAKKUK.

This man, too, is but a name prefixed to a rapt psalm. He lived in the reign of Jehoiakim; was, of course, cotemporary with Jeremiah; and it is generally supposed that he remained in Judah, and died there. Rugged, too, is his name, and cacophonous, nay, of cacophony often used as the type. Yet this name has been carved in bold characters upon the bark of the "Tree of life," and will remain there forever. Rough as it is, it was the name of a noble spirit, and has, moreover, a fine signification—"one that embraces." Embraces what? Does not his daring genius seem stretching out arms to "embrace" those horns of light, which are the "hiding of Jehovah's power?" These are the horns of the altar to which Habakkuk must cling!

His power seems as limited as lofty. His prophecy is a Pompey's Pillar—tall, narrow, and insulated. It begins abruptly, like an arm suddenly shot up in prayer. "How long, O Jehovah, have I cried, and thou hast not hearkened! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me, and there are that raise up strife and contention." Yet this reluctance to describe the frightful scenes he foresaw, is but the trembling vibration of

the javelin ere it is lanched, the hesitation of the accusing orator ere his speech has fully begun, the convulsive flutter in the lightning ere the bolt be sped. Over the heads of the transgressors of his people, he speedily lifts up three words, which express all that follows—Behold, Wonder, Perish—words very suitable, in their fewness, to herald the coming of the Chaldeans, that "bitter and hasty nation," who were swift as the leopard, and fierce as the evening wolf, as well as characteristic of the ardent soul of this prophet, who sees the flower before the bud, and finds out the crime by the torch of the punishment. How he catches and sets before us the rapid progress of the Chaldeans. Come like shadows they may, but they do not so depart. Yielding like wax to receive, he like marble retains their image and tread. "Their judgment and their excellency proceed from themselves." They have—that is lately—revolted from the Assyrian yoke; they are newly let loose; the greater the danger of their prisoners. "Their faces sup up as the east wind." No livelier image of desolation can be given. "They shall gather up captives as the sand," as the east wind lifts and drifts the sands before it. Thus, like "reapers descend to the harvest of death" the foemen, fermenting the "vision which Habakkuk the prophet did see."

Chapter first contains the vision, chapter second the accusation, and chapter third the song, or, as Ewald calls it, the Dithyrambic. These are the beginning, middle, and end of the prophecy. The accusation breaks into a succession of woes, like large electric drops. "Woe unto him that coveteth an evil covetousness for his house. Surely the stone from the wall crieth out, and the beam from the timber answereth, woe, woe to him that buildeth a town by blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity." Probably the woe, thus fearfully ventriloquized from wall and wood, pertains to the King of Babylon. But those that follow light on his own land. "Woe to him that maketh his neighbor drink," "Woe to him that saith to the wood, awake, to the silent stone, arise, shall it teach?" "Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, neither is there any

breath in the midst thereof." But he can not tarry longer pouring forth such preliminary drops, for the Lord himself is about to speak, in the full accents of his ire, and to come in all the majesty of his justice.

How solemn the stillness of the expectation produced by the closing words of the second chapter, "But Jehovah is in his holy temple. Be silent before him all the earth." As in summer the still red evening in the west predicts the burning morrow, do those sublimely simple, and terribly tame words, announce that the ode, on its wide wings of shadowy fire, is at hand.

Amid the scenery of Sinai, there was heard at the crisis of the terror, a trumpet waxing gradually very loud, giving a martial tone to the tumult, drawing its vague awfulness into a point of war, and proclaiming the presence of the Lord of Hosts. Could we conceive that trumpet to have been uttering words, descriptive of the scene around, they had been the words of Habakkuk's song. "God came from Teman, the Holy One from Paran; his glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise."

But the description is not of Sinai alone, nor, indeed, of any single scene. It is a picture of the divine progress or pilgrimage throughout the Jewish economy, formed by combining all the grand symbols of his power and presence into one tumult of glory. It were difficult for a thunder-storm to march calmly and regularly. There must be ragged edges in the darkness, and wild flashes and fluctuations in the light; and so with Habakkuk's song. Its brightness is as the sun's; but there is a hiding or vail over its might. Its figures totter in sympathy with the trembling mountains it describes. Its language bows before its thoughts, like the everlasting mountains below the footsteps of Jehovah.

Where begins this procession? In the wilderness of Paran. There, where still rise the three tower-like summits of Mount Paran, which, when gilded by the evening or morning sun, look like "horns of glory," the great pilgrim begins his progress.

How is he attired? It is in a garment woven of the "marvelous light and the thick darkness." Rays, as of the morning sun, shoot out from his hand. These are at once the horns and the hidings of his power. Like a dark raven, flies before him the plague. Wherever his feet rest, flashes of fire (or birds of prey!) arise. He stands, and the earth moves. He looks through the clouds which vail him, and the nations are scattered. As he advances, the mountains bow. Paran begins the homage; Sinai succeeds; the giants of Seir, and Moab, and Bashan fall prostrate—till every ridge and every summit has felt the awe of his presence. On still he goes, and lo! how the tents of Cushan are uncovered, undone, removed, and their wandering inhabitants vanish away; and how the curtains of the land of Midian do tremble, as he passes by. But have even the waters perceived him? Is he angry at the rivers? Has he breathed on them too? Yea, verily; and Jordan stands aside to let him through dryshod into Canaan's land. And once entered there, the hills imitate the terror of their eastern brethren, and fall a trembling; and the deeps of Galilee's sea and the Mediterranean utter their voice; and the heights, from Olivet to Lebanon, lift up their hands in wonder; and, as his arrows fly abroad, and his spear glitters, the sun stands still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon. Nor does the Awful Pilgrim repose till he has trampled on the nations of Canaan as he had on the mountains of the east, and till over their bruised heads and weltering carcasses he has brought aid to his people and salvation to his anointed.

This analysis, after all, fails to convey the rapid accumulation of metaphor, the heaving struggle of words, the boldness of spirit, and the crowded splendors of this matchless picture. Indeed, almost all the brighter and bolder images of Old Testament poetry are to be found massed up in this single strain. Chronology, geography, everything, must yield to the purpose of the poet; which is, in every possible way, to do justice to his theme, in piling glory on glory around the march of God. Thus he dares to remove the Red Sea itself, and throw it into the

path between Paran and Palestine, that the Deity may pass more triumphantly on.

Yet the modesty is not inferior to the boldness of the song. Habakkuk had begun intending to describe a future coming of God, and, to fire himself for the effort, had called up the glories of the past. But after describing these, he stops short, allowing us only to infer from the former what the future must be. Exhausted and reeling under the perception of that overpowering picture, he dares not image to himself the tremendous secrets of the future. He says only, "Though my country should come to utter desolation, the vines give no fruit, the fields yield no bread, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, nay, exult in the God of my salvation. He will make me to leap as the hart, even though my feet, like God's own, should leap on naked crags, and tread on high places, though they should be those of scathed and sterile desolation."

Beautiful the spirit of Habakkuk, and expressing in another form the grand conclusion of Job, and of all earnest and reconciled spirits. A God so great must be good; and he who hath done things in the past so mighty and terrible, yet in their effect so gracious, may be well expected, and expected with exultation, to pursue his own path, however inscrutable, to the ultimate good of his world and Church, and often to "express his answer to our prayers," as in the days of old, by works as "fearful" as magnificent.

OBADIAH.

There are no less than twelve persons of this name mentioned in Scripture. The most distinguished of them is the Obadiah who saved a hundred of God's prophets, by hiding them in a cave, during a time of scarcity and persecution. Some suppose that he was the prophet before us, although others deem him to have flourished at a much later date—at the same period with Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

He seems to have prophesied in the short interval between the destruction of Jerusalem and that of Edom. His prophecy, which is but a fragment, consists principally of predictions of the judgments impending over Edom, and of the restoration and prosperity of the Jews. There are remarkable coincidences between Obadiah and the 49th chapter of Jeremiah.

A single chapter, which, like this of Obadiah, has survived ages, empires, and religions, must be strongly stamped either with peculiarity or with power. It must have some inextinguishable principle of vitality. Apart from its inspiration, it survives, as the most memorable rebuke to fraternal hardness of heart. It is a brand on the brow of that second Cain, Esau. Hear its words, stern in truth, yet plaintive in feeling, "For slaughter, and for oppression of thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever. In the day when thou stoodest on the other side, in the day when strangers carried away captive his forces, and when foreigners entered his gates, and when they cast lots on Jerusalem, *thou also wast* as *one* of *them*. But thou shouldest not have *so* looked on the day of thy brother, on the day when he became a stranger, nor have rejoiced over the sons of Judah in the day when they were destroyed, nor have magnified thy words in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity, nor have *so* looked on his affliction in the day of his calamity, nor have put forth thine hand on his substance in the day of his calamity, nor have stood in the cross way to cut off those of his that escaped, nor have delivered up those of his that remained, in the day of distress." "Verily, O Esau, thou wert guilty concerning thy brother, when thou sawest the anguish of his soul, and when, perhaps, like Joseph, he besought thee, and thou wouldst not hear." And at thy Philistine forehead was Obadiah commissioned to aim one smooth sling-stone, which, having prostrated thee, has been preserved for us, in God's word, as a monument of thy fratricidal folly. This is that little book of Obadiah.

HAGGAI.

Between Obadiah and Haggai, many important events had occurred in the history of God's people. The city Jerusalem had been captured, the Temple sacked, and the brave but ill-fated inhabitants been carried captive to Babylon. There they had groaned and wept bitterly under their bondage, and one song of their captive genius, of unequaled pathos, has come down to us. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" How indeed, sing it, save as we may conceive the fiends singing in hell the songs of heaven, the words the same, the melodies the same, but woe for the accompaniments and for the hearts? How sing here the songs of Judah's vintage, and Judah's ingathering, and Judah's marriage-feasts? Surely it is the most delicate and infernal of insults for a spoiler to demand mirth instead of labor, a song instead of patient sorrow! We, they reply, can sing at your bidding no songs of Zion, but we can testify our love to her by our tears. And, trickling through the hand of the taskmaster, and running down three thousand years, has one of these tears come to us, and we call it the 137th Psalm.

From this state of degradation and woe, Judah had been raised. She had been brought back in circumstances mournfully different, indeed, from the high day when, coming out of Egypt, she turned, and encamping between Pihahiroth and the sea, felt that the extremity of the danger was the first edge of the rising deliverance, and when she went forth by her armies with a mighty power and a stretched-out arm. Now she must kneel, and have the bandage of her slavery taken off by human hands, and be led tamely out into her own land, under the banners of a stranger. Even after she had reached and com-

menced the operation of building the Temple, numerous difficulties, arising partly from the opposition of surrounding tribes, and partly from the indifference of the people themselves, were presented. For fourteen or fifteen years the enterprise was abandoned, and it is on an unfinished Temple that we see Haggai first appearing to stir up his slothful, and to comfort his desponding, countrymen.

We know only of this prophet, that he was born during the captivity; that he had returned with Zerubbabel, and flourished under the reign of Darius Hystaspis.

The right of Haggai to the title of poet has been denied, on account of his comparatively tame and prosaic style; but we must remember the distinction we have indicated between poetic statement and poetic song. He has little of the latter, but much of the former. There is nothing in the Hebrew tongue calculated more to rouse the blood, than these simple words of his—"Who is there left among you that saw this house in its former glory? And what do ye see it now? Is it not as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah. And be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high-priest. And be strong, O all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah. And work, for I am with you, saith Jehovah, Lord of Hosts. For thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, yet once more, it is a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of Hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah, God of Hosts. Greater shall be the glory of this latter house than of the former, saith Jehovah, God of Hosts. And in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah, God of Hosts." This, if prose, is the prose of a pyramid, or an Olympus, compared with the flowery exuberance of Enna or Tempe. It is the bareness of grandeur. It is one of the moors of heaven.

The building of the second Temple had been resigned in despair, partly because it was impossible to supply some of the

principal ornaments of the ancient edifice, such as the Urim and Thummim, the ark containing the two tables of the law, the pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the cloud, or Shekinah, that covered the mercy-seat, and was the symbol of the divine glory. It became then the part of Haggai, in his work of encouragement and revival, to point out the advent of one object to the new Temple, which should supply the lack of all. This was to be the living cloud—the personal Shekinah —the Christ promised to the fathers. And he, when he came, was not only to glorify the mercy-seat, and brighten the turban of the high-priest as he went in to pray, but to pour a radiance over the whole world, of which he had been the desire. Did the Temple shake when the cloud of glory entered it in Solomon's day? The Earth was to respond to the vibration, when the Son of Man came to his Father's house. "Tidings of the New Shekinah" may, therefore, be the proper title for Haggai's prophecy; and while the old men wept when they contrasted the present with the former Temple, he rejoiced, because he saw in the absence of those external glories, in the setting of those elder stars, the approaching presence of a spiritual splendor—the rising of the last great luminary of the Church.

It was not needful that the herald of an event (comparatively) so near should be dressed in all the insignia of his office. These had been necessary once to attract attention, and secure respect, but now the forerunner was merely, like Elijah, "to gird up his loins, and run before" the chariot which was at hand. And thus we account for the comparative bareness of style appertaining to the prophet Haggai.

His associate in office was

ZECHARIAH.

He was the "Son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo." "In Ezra," says Dr. Eadie, "he is styled simply the son of Iddo, most probably because his father, Barachiah, had died in early manhood, and his genealogy, in accordance with Jewish custom, is

traced at once to his grandfather, Iddo, who would be better known. He appears to have been a descendant of Levi, and thus entitled to exercise the priestly, as he did the prophetic, office. He entered upon his prophetic duties in the 8th month of the second year of Darius, about 520, A.C." Jewish tradition relates that the prophet died in his native country, after "a life prolonged to many days," and was buried by the side of Haggai, his associate.

The object of Zechariah is precisely that of Haggai—"writ large." It is to rouse an indolent, to encourage a desponding, and to abash a backsliding people. This he does, if not with greater energy, yet by bolder types, and through the force of broader glimpses into the future, than his coadjutor.

In all prophetical Scripture, we find lofty symbols rushing down, as if impatient of their elevation, into warm practical application, like high white clouds dissolving in rain. This we noticed in Ezekiel. But in Zechariah it is still more remarkable. The red horses, the four horns, the stone with seven eyes, the candlestick of gold, the olive-trees, the flying roll, the ephah and the talent of lead, the four chariots from between the two mountains, the staves Beauty and Bands, the cup of trembling, the burdensome stone, and the fountain of purification, are not mere brilliant dreams, "forever flushing round a summer's sky," but are closely connected with the main purposes of the prophecy. It is Haggai's argument pleaded from the clouds.

The poet who extracts his own thought and imagery from ordinary scenery, is worthy of his name. But he is the truest maker, who forms a scenery and world of his own. This has Zechariah done. The wildest of the "Arabian Nights" contains no descriptions so unearthly as those in his prophecy. Those mountains, what and where are they? Those chariots, whence come, and whither go they? Those four horns, who has raised? Those red horses, what has dyed them? But strangest and most terrible is the "flying roll," "passing like night from land to land"—having "strange power of speech," stranger power of silence—a judgment, verily, that doth not linger, a damnation

that doth not slumber. How powerfully does this represent law as a swift executioner, winged, and ever ready to follow the trail of crime, at once with accusation, sentence, and punishment!

From the height of contempt, Zechariah has reached for the then state of his country—he has but a few steps to rise—to a panoramic prospect of the future, even of its most distant points and pinnacles. The long day of Christianity itself looks dim in the splendors of its evening; the second advent eclipses the first. The "day of the Lord" surmounts all intermediate objects; and the "last battle" brings his prophecy to a resplendent close.

One stray passage must be noticed, from its connection with the New Testament, and the tragedy of the Cross. It is that where the Lord of Hosts cries out, in his impatience and anger, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." How startling the haste of this exclamation! "Haste, for the victim has been bound to the altar. Haste, for the harps in heaven are silent till the day of atonement has passed away. Haste, for hell is dumb in the agony of its dark anticipations. Haste, for the eyes of the universe have been fixed upon the spot; all things are ready; yea, the sackcloth of the sun has been woven, and ere that darkness pass away, the sweat of an infinite agony must have been expanded, and the blood of an infinite atonement must have been shed."

Did not the great victim bear this in view on the last night of his life, when, looking up to the darkened heaven and the unsheathed sword, he sounded himself the signal for the blow, as he cried, "It is written, smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered?"

This wondrous cry was obeyed. The sword awoke against the man, God's fellow. It was "bathed in heaven." And now no more is the cry raised, "Awake, O sword." Against the people of God it is sheathed forever. Yet shall this dread moment never be forgotten. For even as in the glad valleys of

earth, when sunshine is resting on the landscape, the sound of thunder heard remote only enhances the sense of security, and deepens the feeling of repose, so, in the climes of heaven's day, shall the memory of that hour so dark, and that cry so fearful, be to the souls of the ransomed a joy forever.

MALACHI.

The word means "my angel or messenger." Hence some have contended that there was no such person as Malachi, but that Ezra was the author of the book. Origen even maintains that the author was an incarnate angel. The general opinion, however, is, that he was a real personage, who flourished about 400 years before Christ.

It was meet that the ancient dispensation should close amid such cloudy uncertainties. It had been all along the "religion of the vail." There was a vail, verily, upon more than the face of Moses. Every thing from Sinai—its center, down to the least bell or pomegranate—wore a vail. Over Malachi's face, form, and fortunes, it hangs dark and impenetrable. A masked actor, his tread and his voice are thunder. The last pages of the Old Testament seem to stir as in a furious wind, and the word curse, echoing down to the very roots of Calvary, closes the record.

On Malachi's prophecy, there is seen mirrored, in awful clearness, in fiery red, the coming of Christ, and of his forerunner, the Baptist. "I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Last of a long and noble line—fated to have no follower for four hundred years—a certain melancholy bedims this prophet's strains. His language is bare and bald, compared with that of some of the others, although this seems to spring rather from his subject than himself. The "seal of the prophets," as the rabbis called him, is a *black* seal. And thus, although he abounds in predictions of Christ's near approach, you shut him with a feeling of sadness.

It is impossible to close this review of Israel's ancient bards without very peculiar sensations. We feel as one might who had been dwelling for a season among the higher Alps, as he turned to the plains again, torrents and avalanches still sounding in his ears, and a memory of the upper grandeurs dwindling to his eyes all lower objects. But have we brought down with us, and do we wish to confer on others, nothing but admiration? Nay, verily, these Alps of humanity waft down many important lessons. Showing how high man has attained in the past, they show the altitude of the man of the future world. To the poet, how exciting, at once, and humbling! He complains, at times, that he too soon and easily overtakes his models, and finds them cloud or clay after all; but here are models forever above and beyond him, as are the stars. And yet he is permitted to look at, to be lightened by them, "to roll their raptures, *and* to catch their fire." Here are God's own pictures, glowing on the inaccessible walls. To the believer in their supernatural claims, how thrilling the proud reflection—this bark, as it carries me to heaven, has the flag of earthly genius floating above it. To the worshiper of genius, these books present the object no longer as an idol, but as a god. The admirer of man finds him here in his highest mood and station, speaking from the very door of the eternal shrine, with God tuning his voice and regulating his periods. Genius and religion are here seen wedded to each other, with unequal dowries, indeed, but with one heart. And there is thus conveyed, in parable, the prospect of their eternal union.

And can we close this old volume without an emotion of unutterable astonishment? Here, from the rudest rock, has distilled the sweetest honey of song. The simplest and most limited of languages has been the medium of the loftiest eloquence—the oaten pipe of the Hebrew shepherd has produced a music, to which that of the Grecian organ and the Latin fife is discord. Here, too, centuries before the Augustan age, are conceptions of God which Cicero never grasped, nor Virgil ever sung. Race, climate, original genius, will not altogether account

for this. The real answer to the question, Why burned that bush so brightly amid the lonely wilderness, is, God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel, *dwelt therein*, and the place is still lovely, yet dreadful, with his presence.

CHAPTER XII.

CIRCUMSTANCES MODIFYING NEW TESTAMENT POETRY.

The main principle of the Old Testament may be comprised in the sentence, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: this is the whole duty of man." The main principle of the New is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And yet, round these two simple sentences, what masses of beauty and illustration have been collected! To enforce them, what argument, what eloquence, what poetry, have been employed! Say, rather, that those truths, from their exceeding breadth, greatness, and magnetic power, have levied a tribute from multitudinous regions, and made every form of thought and composition subservient to their influence and end.

The New Testament, as well as the Old, is a poem—the Odyssey to that Iliad. And over the poetry of both, circumstances and events have exerted a modifying power. Yet it is remarkable, that in the New Testament, although events of a marvelous kind were of frequent occurrence, they are not used so frequently in a poetical way as in the Old. The highest poetry in the New Testament, is either didactic in its character, as the Sermon on the Mount, and Paul's praise of charity, or it is kindled up by visions of the future, and apparitions through the present darkness of the great white throne.

The resurrection, as connected with the doctrine of a general judgment, is the event which has most colored the poetry of the New Testament. The throne becomes a far more commanding object than even the mount that might be touched. Faint,

in fact, is the reflection of this "Great Vision" upon the page of ancient prophecy: the trump is heard, as if from a distance; the triumph of life over death is anticipated seldom, and with little rapture. But no sooner do we reach the threshold of the new dispensation, than we meet voices from the interior of the sanctuary, proclaiming a judgment; the sign of the Son of Man is advanced above, the graves around are seen with the tombstones loosened and the turf broken, and "I shall arise" hovering in golden characters over each narrow house; the central figure bruises death under his feet, and points with a cross to the distant horizon, where life and immortality are cleaving the clouds, and coming forth with beauty and healing on their wings. Such is the prospect in our Christian sanctuary; and hence the supernatural grandeur of the strains which swell within it. Hence the rapture of the challenge, "O death, where is thy sting?" Hence the solemnity of the assertion, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man." Hence the fiery splendor of the description, "The Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." Hence the harping symphonies and sevenfold hallelujahs of the Apocalypse, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Here, indeed, is a source of inspiration, open only to the New Testament writers. The heathens knew not of the resurrection of the dead. But Paul and John have extracted a poetry from the darkness of the grave. In heathen belief, there was, indeed, a judgment succeeding the death of the individual; but no general assemblage, no public trial, no judgment-seat, "high and lifted up," no flaming universe, and, above all, no God-man swaying the fiery storm, and, with the hand that had been nailed to the cross, opening the books of universal and final decision.

"Meditations among the Tombs," what a pregnant title to what a feeble book! Ah! the tombs are vaster and more numerous than Hervey dreamed. There is the churchyard among the mountains, where the "rude forefathers of the ham-

let lie." There is the crowded cemetery of the town, where silent thousands have laid themselves down to repose. There are the wastes and wildernesses of the world, where "armies whole have sunk," and where the dead have here their shroud of sand, and there their shroud of snow. There is the hollow of the earth, where Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and many besides, have been engulfed. There are the fields of battle, which have become scenes of burial, as well as of death. And there is the great ocean, which has wrapped its garment of green round many a fair and noble head, and which rolls its continual requiem of sublimity and sadness over the millions whom it has entombed. Thus does the earth, with all its continents and oceans, roll around the sun a splendid sepulcher!

Amid those dim catacombs, what victims have descended! The hero, who has coveted the dreadful distinction of entering hell, red from a thousand victories, is in the grave. The sage, who has dared to say that, if he had been consulted in the making of the universe he had made it better, is in the grave. The monarch, who has wept for more worlds to conquer and to reign over, is in the grave. The poet, who, towering above his kind, had seemed to demand a contest with superior intelligences, and sought to measure his pen against the red thunderbolts of Heaven, is in the grave. Where now the ambition of the first, the insane presumption of the second, the idle tears of the third, the idler laurels of the last? All gone, sunk, lost, drowned, in that ocean of Death, where no oar ever yet broke the perpetual silence!

But, alas! these graves are not full. In reason's ear—an ear ringing ever with strange and mystic sounds—there is heard a voice, from the thousand tombs, saying—"Yet there is room." The churchyard among the hills has a voice, and says—"There is room under the solitary birch which waves over me." The city cemetery hath a voice, and says—"Crowded as I am, I can yet open a corner for thy dust; yet there is room." The field of battle says—"There is room. I have earth enough to cover all my slain." The wildernesses have a voice, and say—

"There is room in us—room for the travelers who explore our sands or our snows—room for the caravans that carry their merchandise across our dreadful solitudes." The depth of the ocean says—"Thousands have gone down within me—nay, an entire world has become the prey of my waters, still my caverns are not crowded; yet there is room." The heart of the earth has a voice—a hollow voice—and says—"What are Korah and his company to me? I am empty; yet there is room." Do not all the graves compose thus one melancholy chorus, and say—"Yet there is room; room for thee, thou maiden, adorned with virtue and loveliness; room for thee, thou aged man; room for thee, thou saint, as surely as there was room for thy Savior; room for thee, thou sinner, as surely as thy kindred before thee have laid themselves and their iniquities down in the dust; room for all, for all must in us at last lie down."

But is this sad cry to resound forever? No; for we are listening for a mightier voice, which is yet to pierce the cold ear of death, and drown the dull monotony of the grave. How magnificent, even were they fictitious, but how much more, as recording a fact, the words—"All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." To what voices do the dead not listen! Music can charm the serpent, but it can not awaken the dead. The voice of an orator can rouse a nation to frenzy, but let him try his eloquence on the dead, and a hollow echo will rebuke his folly. The thunder in the heavens can appall a city, but there is one spot in it where it excites no alarm, and that spot is the tomb.

> "The lark's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
> No more arouse them from their narrow bed."

There is but one voice which the dead will hear. It is that voice which shall utter the words—"Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Was it a sublime spectacle, when, at the cry, "Lazarus, come forth," the dead man appeared at the mouth of the sepulcher,

the nue of returning life on his cheek, forming a strange contrast to his white grave-clothes? What, then, shall be said of the coming forth of innumerable Lazaruses, of the whole congregation of the dead—the hermit rising from his solitary grotto, the soldier from his field of blood, the sailor from his sea-sepulcher, the shepherd from his mountain-grave? To see —as in the season of spring, the winged verdure climbs the mountain, clothes the plain, flushes the forest, adorns the brink and the brow of the precipice—in this second spring, a torrent of life passing over the world, and living men coming forth, where all before had been silence, desolation, and death; to see the volcano disgorging the dead which were in him, and the earthquake relaxing his jaws, and giving back the dead which were in him, and the sullen tarn restoring her lawful captives, and the ocean unrolling and revealing the victims of her "innermost main," and the Seine disclosing her suicidal prey, and the wastes and wildernesses becoming unretentive of their long-concealed dead—every pore quickening into life, every grave becoming a womb. This is the spectacle of the Christian resurrection—a spectacle but once to be beheld, but to be remembered forever—a spectacle which every eye shall witness—a spectacle around which a universe shall gather with emotions of uncontrollable astonishment and of fearful joy.

The New Testament stands and shines in the luster of this expectation. So important is the place of resurrection in the system, that Jesus identifies himself with it, saying—"I am the resurrection and the life." And from his empty grave floods of meaning, hope, and beauty, flow forth over the New Testament page. The Lord's day, too, forms a link connecting the rising of Christ with that of his people, and is covered with the abundance both of the first-fruits and of the full harvest.

Among the incidents in the life of Christ, there are several of an intensely poetical character. We shall mention here the Transfiguration. This singular event did not take place, as commonly supposed, on Tabor. Tabor was then the seat of a Roman military fort. It took place on a high, nameless moun-

tain, probably in Galilee. It was seemingly on the Sabbath-day ("After *six* days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John, up into a high mountain apart") that this grand exception to the tenor of Christ's earthly history was manifested. It was a rehearsal of his Ascension. His form, which had been bent under a load of sorrow (a bend more glorious than the bend of the rainbow), now erected itself, like the palm-tree from pressure, and he became like unto a "pillar in the temple of his God." His brow expanded; its wrinkles of care fled, and the sweat-drops of his climbing toil were transmuted into sparks of glory. His eye flashed forth, like the sun from behind a cloud—nay, his whole frame became transparent, as if it were one eye. The light which had long lain in it concealed was now unvailed in full effulgence: "His face did shine as the sun." His very raiment was caught in a shower of radiance, and became white as no fuller on earth could whiten it; and who shall describe the luster of his streaming hair, or the eloquent silence of that smile which sate, like the love of God, upon his lips?

> "What hill is like to Tabor hill, in beauty and in fame,
> For there, in sad days of his flesh, o'er Christ a glory came,
> And light o'erflowed him like a sea, and raised his shining brow,
> And the voice came forth, which bade all worlds the Son of God avow?"

This radiance passed away. The glory of the transfigured Jesus faded as the red cloud fades in the west, when the sun has set. (And how could the disciples bear the change? And yet, as Christ, in his coronation robes, had seemed, perhaps, distant and strange to them, did not his returning self appear dearer, if less splendid, than his glorified humanity?) But the glory did not pass without leaving a mild reflex upon the page of Scripture. "We were with him in the holy mount," says Peter; and was not the transfigured Christ in his eye when he speaks immediately after of "The *day-star* arising in our hearts?" And John's picture of Christ in the Apocalypse, is a

colossal copy of the figure he had seen on the holy mount, vibrating between dust and Deity, at once warm as humanity, and glorious as God.

As producing or controlling the poetry of the New Testament, next to the resurrection, stands the *incarnation*. "Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth?" Will God, above all, dwell in a form of human flesh, and so dwell, that we must say of it, "God is here," nay, "this is God?" Is there found a point where the finite and the infinite meet, mingle without confusion, marry without compulsion, and is this point the Man of Galilee? In fact, the incarnation and poetry bear a resemblance. Poetry is truth dwelling in beauty. The incarnation is the Word "made" holy and beauteous "flesh." Poetry is the everlasting descent of the Jupiter of the True into the arms of the Danae of the Beautiful, in a shower of Gold. The incarnation is God the Spirit, descending on Jesus the perfect man, like a dove, and abiding upon and within him. The difference is, that while the truth of Jesus is entirely moral, that of poetry is more varied; and that while the one incarnation is personal and real, the other is hypothetical and ideal. Man and God have rhymed together; and the glorious couplet is, "the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

From this fact have sprung the matchless antitheses and climaxes of Paul's prose poetry, Peter's fervid meditations on the glory of Christ, and John's pantings of love toward the "Man God," on whose bosom he had leaned, and whose breath had made him forever warm.

But, without dwelling on other circumstances modifying New Testament poetry, we pass to speak, in the next chapter, of the Poetry of the Gospels, and of that transcendent poet who died on Calvary

CHAPTER XIII.

POETRY OF THE GOSPELS.

Perhaps we had better have designated this chapter "The Poetry of Jesus," for nearly all the poetry in the four Evangelists clusters in, around his face, form, bearing, and words.

The word "character," as applied to Jesus, is a misnomer. Character seems generally to mean something outstanding from the being—a kind of dress worn outwardly; at best, a faint index to the qualities within. Thus, to say of a man, "he has a good moral character," is to say little. You still ask, what is he? what is the nature of his *being?* to what order does he belong? is he of the earth earthy, or born from above? It is of Christ's being, not his character, that we would speak, while seeking to show its essential poetry.

The company of the disciples in the "Acts," have answered, by anticipation, all questions about Christ's being, in the memorable words, "thy *holy child*, Jesus." He was a child—a holy child—a divine child—an eternal child. He seems still to sit "among the doctors," with Zoroaster, and Moses, and Confucius, and Socrates, and Plato, ranged around him, "both hearing them and asking them questions," while they, like the sheaves of Joseph's brethren, are compelled to bow down before the noble boy. His sermons, possessing no logical sequence and coherence, are the utterances of a divine infant; the tongue is just a produced heart; and his words flow up, in irregular yet calm succession, from the depth below. And yet all he says is, "like an angel, vital everywhere," and each word is a whole. Like jewels from a crown, the sentences drop down

entire: "Ye are the light of the world;" "Ye are the salt of the earth;" "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light;" "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light;" "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?" (How many dark lanterns—such as misguided men of genius—does this one sentence inclose!) And are not all inconsistent, half-formed, or conventional systems of morality, exploded by the grand generality—the scope transcending far the duration of this mortal life for its aim and accomplishment—of the words, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect?"

But wholeness belonged to more than Christ's words; it belonged to himself and to his words, *because* they faithfully and fully represented himself, even as the acorn carries in it the figure of the oak. He was entire; and his possession of all virtues was signified by the gentle calm which reigned over, and inclosed them within it. Just as the whole man comes out in his smile, the "fullness of the Godhead" lay, like a still, settled smile, on Christ's meek face. His eye concentrated all the rays of the Divine Omniscience into its mild and tearful orb. His heart was a miniature ocean of love. His arm seemed the symbol of Omnipotence. His voice was the faint and thrilling echo of the sound of many waters. We are apt to think and speak as if the attributes of Divinity were somehow crowded and crushed into Mary's son. But those who saw him and believed, felt that Godhead lay in him softly and fully, as the image of the sun lies in a drop of dew. "In him dwelt the fullness of Godhead bodily," as a willing tenant, not as a reluctant captive.

But, as a man, as well as the incarnation of Godhead, he was perfect. Beside the stately, ancient, and awful forms of the patriarchs of the old world, and the bards and first kings of Israel, he seems young and slender. What were his years to those of Adam and Methuselah? He wrote not, like Solomon, on trees—from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop which springeth out of the wall. He had no Sinai for pedestal, as

Moses had. He had not the mighty speech of Isaiah. But he possessed what all these wanted—he possessed perfection. He was only a child, but he was a celestial child; he was only a lamb, but it was a lamb without blemish and without spot. In him, as God-man, all contrasts and contradictions were blended and reconciled. You hear him now, in tones soft as youthful love, preaching concord to his disciples; and again, in the voice of a terrible thunder, and with the gestures of an avenger, denouncing wrath upon the hypocrite and the formalist, the Pharisee and the Scribe. Hear yonder infant weeping in the manger of Bethlehem. That little trembling hand is the hand of him who made the world; that feeble, wailing cry is the voice of him who spake, and it was done—who commanded and it stood fast. See that carpenter laboring in the shed at Nazareth! The penalty of Adam is standing on his brow in the sweat-drops of his toil. That carpenter is all the while directing the march of innumerable suns, and supplying the wants of endless worlds. Behold yonder weeper at the grave of Lazarus! His tears are far too numerous to be counted; it is a shower of holy tears, and the bystanders are saying—"Behold, how he loved him!" That weeper is the Eternal God, who shall wipe away all tears from off all faces. See, again, that sufferer in the Garden of Gethsemane! He is alone; there is no one with him in his deep agony; and you hear the large drops of his anguish, "like the first of a thunder-shower," falling slowly and heavily to the ground. And, louder than these drops, there comes a voice, saying—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The utterer of that sad cry, the swelterer of those dark drops, is he whom the harps of heaven are even now praising, and who is basking in the sunshine of Jehovah's smile. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness."

The *reticence* of Jesus is one of the most remarkable of his characteristics. What he might have told us, in comparison of what he has!—of man, of God, of the future on earth, of the eternal state! "He knew what was in man." "The Son only

knoweth the Father." "Thou, Lord, knowest all things." But he remained silent. Nor was his silence forced and reluctant. It was wise and willing. It seemed natural to him, as is their twinkling silence to the stars. This surrounded him with a peculiar grandeur. The greatest objects in the universe are the stillest. The ocean has a voice, but the sun is silent. The seraphim sing, the Shekinah is dumb. The forests murmur, but the constellations speak not. Aaron spoke, Moses' face but shone. Sweetly might the high-priest discourse, but the Urim and Thummim, the blazing stones upon his breast, flashed forth a meaning deeper and diviner far. Jesus, like a sheep before her shearers, was dumb in death; but still more marvelous was the self-denied and God-like silence of his life.

The secret of this silence lay partly in the practicalness of his purpose. He had three great things to do in the space of three years, and he could spare no time for doing or talking about aught else. He had to preach a pure morality, to live a pure life, and to die a death of substitution so vast, as to stop the motions of the universe till it was over. This was the full baptism wherewith he was to be baptized. He was straitened till it was accomplished. He bent his undivided energies to finish this threefold work; and he did finish it. He reduced morality to a clear essence, forming a perfect mirror to the conscience of man. He melted down all codes of the past into two consummate precepts. To these he added the double sanction of love and terror. And thus condensed, and thus sanctioned, he applied them fearlessly to all classes by whom he was surrounded. He did something far more difficult. He led a life—and such a life! of poverty and power, of meanness and grandeur, of contempt and glory, of contact with sinners and of perfect personal purity—a life the most erratic and the most heavenly—a life from which demons shrank in terror, round which men crowded in eager curiosity, and over which angels stooped in wonder and love—a life which gathered about the meek current of its benevolence the fiery chariots and fiery horses of all miraculous gifts and all divine energies. And having thus lived, he came purged,

as by fire, to a death, which seemed to have borrowed materials of terror, from earth, heaven, and hell, to bow down along with its own burden upon his solitary head.

But, to humble him to submission, the fearful load of Calvary was not required. He was humble all his life long, and never more so than when working his miracles. How he shrunk, after they were wrought, from the echo of their fame! He did not rebuke the woman of Samaria for proclaiming her conversion, but he often rebuked his disciples for spreading the report of his miracles. These were great, but his purpose was greater far. They were an equipage worthy of a god, but only an equipage. If we would understand his profound lowliness, let us see him, who had been clothed with the inaccessible light as a garment, girding himself with a towel, and washing his disciples' feet; or let us look at him, who erst came from "Teman and from Paran," in all the pomp of Godhead, riding on an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass; or let us watch the woman washing his feet with tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head; or let us sit down by the side of the well at Samaria, and see him who fainted not, neither was weary, with "his six days' work—a world," wearied upon this solitary way, and hear him, who was the Word of God, speaking to a poor and dissolute female as "never man spake." Surely one great charm of this charmed life, one chief power of this all-powerful and all-conforming story, arises from the lowliness of the base of that ladder, the "top of which did reach unto heaven."

But this lowliness was mingled with gentleness. It was a flower which grew along the ground—not a fire running along it. We have no doubt that this expressed itself in the very features and expression of his countenance. We have seen but one pictured representation which answered to our ideal of the face and figure of Jesus. It was the work of an Italian master, whose name we have forgotten, and represented Christ talking to the woman of Samaria. It was a picture which might have converted a soul. There sat the wearied Savior, by the well-side—his eye full of a far look of love and sorrow, as if he saw

the whole degraded species in the one sinner before him, and his hand half open, as if it held in it "the living water"—the woman listening with downcast looks, and tears trickling down her cheeks—her pitcher resting on the mouth of the well, and behind her, seen in the distance, the sunny sky and glowing mountains of Palestine. But, in the noble figure and the ethereal grandeur of his countenance, you saw that the gentleness was not that of woman, nor even that of man; it was the gentleness of him whose "dwelling is with the humble and the contrite in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones." It was this which led him to gentle associates —to the society of the holy women, and of those children who saw the simplicity of infancy blended with the perspicacity of Godhead in the same face, and felt at once awe-struck and attracted. The babes and sucklings saw and felt what was hid from the wise and prudent. But the chief scene for the exercise of this exceeding gentleness was the company of publicans, sinners, and harlots. The sight of personified purity mingling with the vilest of beings, with condescension, blame, hope, and pity expressed in his countenance, instead of disgust and horror, was touching beyond the reach of tears. Like the moon looking full in upon a group of evil-doers, at once rebuking, softening, and spiritualizing the scene, so at Simon's table shone on the sinners around, the shaded orb of the Redeemer's face, and it seemed as if heaven were dimly dawning upon the imminent victims of hell.

And yet, with this mildness, there was blended a certain ineffable dignity. The dignity of a child approaches the sublime. It is higher than the dignity of a king—higher, because less conscious. It resembles rather the dignity of the tall rock, or of the pine surmounting its summit. This dignity, compounded of purity and unconsciousness, was united in Christ to that which attends knowledge and power. It was this which made the people exclaim, that he taught with authority, and not as the scribes—that wrung from the officers sent to apprehend him, the testimony that never man spake like this man.

and rendered lofty, instead of ludicrous, his asseveration, "I and my Father are one." A dignity this which deserted him not, even when he wore the scarlet robe, and carried the reed for a scepter, and the thorns for a crown; nay, which transfigured these into glorious emblems in the blaze of spirit which shone around him. The old painters often paint Christ with a halo around his head. No such halo had, or needed, that holy brow; it was enough that a divine dignity formed a hedge around it.

But, "on all his glory," there was another "defense"—a red rim of anger circled it at times. The "Lamb" became, at rare intervals, angry, and sinned, not in feeling nor in expressing that righteous rage—righteous, although seeming strange as a volcano in a valley, or as thunder from the blue sky. The forked flames of Sinai burst out from Olivet, the lips of eternal love become white with the foam of indignation, and upon his enemies there fall "woes" heavier than those of the ancient seers, and which seem to rehearse the last words, "Depart, ye cursed." There are no such tremendous voices in all literature as these. We feel, as we listen, that there is no enemy like an offended lover—no fire like the sheen of a dead affection—no element so bitter as that into which neglect changes the sweet —no words like these, "The wrath of the Lamb." "The wrath of the Lamb!" These are words from which heaven and earth shall flee away, and which shall make its victims cry out to the rocks and the mountains, "Cover us, cover us from the wrath of him that sitteth upon the throne, and *of the Lamb*;" but the rocks and the mountains will not reply.

Such displays of anger were few and far between. They seem escapes, albeit, always just in their cause and holy in their spirit. And escapes, too, seem his prophecies and his miracles. "Virtue goes out of him." Portions of his infinite knowledge slip, as if involuntarily, from his mind, and now and then crumbs drop down from the table of his Omnipotence upon the happy bystanders. It is always as if he were restraining his boundless powers and gifts, as if he "stayed his thunder

in mid-volley;" for, does he not say himself, "Thinkest thou that I can not now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Miracles, as we have before hinted, he holds in severe subordination to the moral purposes of his office, and hence he would never work them, either merely to gratify curiosity or expressly to corroborate his mission. They came from him like sudden reflections of the sun upon the eye or brow, and thus they answered the important purpose of turning attention toward him—of proving that what he said was not to be treated lightly—of showing him to be superior to a mere teacher—of starting the question, "Is the doctrine worthy of the magnificence of the circumstances in which it is set?"—of causing a finger of supernal light to rest upon the head of the lowly youth of Nazareth—and to mark him out, once and forever, to the world. The feeling, too, that a miraculous energy was fluctuating around, and might flame up in a moment into a conflagration, dangerous to be approached, served to clear a space about, and pave a way before him, and to leave him ample time and room for working the work his Father had given him to do.

Superiority to pride of knowledge and power was a distinguishing feature of Jesus. Pride can not, indeed, coexist with perfect knowledge and power, for it implies as certainly something above, as something below it. The proud man looks up as well as down, measuring himself with what is beyond, as well as with what is beneath him. But this superiority in our blessed Lord was only a part of that unconsciousness which so signally characterized him. He seemed conscious of God only. He overflowed with God. Even when he spoke of himself, it was but as a vessel where God dwelt. His frequent "I" is always running into the great "Thou" of God. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." This was all that we can conceive of absorption into the Deity. The essence, indeed, is never lost, nor the personality confounded; but the Son, ever rushing into his Father's arms, seems almost identified with him.

Is the term geniality too common and too low to be applied

to this transcendent being? And yet it forms but a true and elegant version of the rude vernacular of his enemies. "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber." No fugitive from the temptations and responsibilities of man was man's Savior. He feared them not; he faced them, and he never fell before them. He came "eating and drinking," and angels wondered, and sinners wondered, as they saw those common actions glorified into symbols and sacraments, the bread becoming the "corn of heaven" under his smile, and the wine seeming pure as his own blood beneath his blessing.

On all anchoritism and monachism, he looked down. Unbreathed valor, unexercised virtue, chastity untried, compulsory temperance, the ostrich device of hiding the eyes from danger, were alien, if not abhorrent, to his frank, large, and fearless nature. Think of the marriage at Cana of Galilee. We stay not with triflers, to inquire at length into the quality of the wine there transmuted. Suffice it, that in the language of the Eton boy, "The conscious water saw her God, and blushed." Suffice it that this, surely, like all Christ's miracles, must have been perfect in its kind. He made the tongue of the dumb, not merely to speak, but to sing; he made the lame not only to walk, but to leap as a hart; the blind to see, at first, indeed, men like trees walking, but ultimately with the utmost clearness; and the paralytic to take up his bed and walk; the calm he produced on the sea was a "great calm;" the bread he multiplied must have been of the finest of the wheat; and doubtless the wine he renewed in the vessels of Cana was of the richest of the vintage. His lessons, stated or implied here or elsewhere on the subject, are none the less imperative. They seem to be these—first, that all excess is sin; secondly, that the moderate use of God's bounties can never be charged in itself with iniquity; but, thirdly, he never denies, nay, the spirit of his teaching rather affirms, that there are cases and constitutions where even moderation may be dangerous, as the parent and prelude of undue indulgence, and where sacrifice may be better than mercy.

And yet tradition has said that Jesus was seldom seen to smile, and never to laugh. Such traditions we hold worthless, for why should not smiles, at least, like birds of calm, have often sat upon his lips, and God's sunshine upon that "hill of holiness," his divine head? But there lay a burden upon his soul, which made his smiles few, and his sunshine a scattered light. Even as the noble charger smells the battle afar off, and paws restlessly till he has mingled with the thunder of the captains and the shouting, so did this "Lion of the tribe of Judah" feel the approach of his foes, nor could he rest, nor could he slumber, till he had fought the battle, and gained the victory of the world. There were constant vision and expectation of the decease at Jerusalem, and this bred a burning desire after the passion of the Cross, which formed a slow, subdued fever within him. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished? With desire have I desired to eat this passover ere I suffer." Even on the mount of the Transfiguration, he looked toward Calvary, and spake of his coming death. This added a melancholy meaning to his words, a nobility to his aspect, and a tremulous solemnity to his very smiles. Great always is the life which stands even, unconsciously, in the shadow of coming death. The shadow *that* coming event casts before it is ever sublime and sublimating.

Yet, as it drew near, his manhood came out in the form of a manlike shudder at the unspeakable cup which was given him to drink. He saw down into it more clearly than ever sufferer was permitted before or since to see into his coming woes; and if he did shrink and shiver, the shrinking was but for a moment, and the shiver proved him human, and that his torments would not be the incredible, impossible agonies of a God, but those of one who was bone of our bone, as well as the brightness of the Father's glory. It was, indeed, an awful moment, during which he gasped out the words, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He had tasted of its first drops, and they were the great drops of the bloody sweat; he had looked into its contents, and seen them bubbling up like the springs of hell.

and he gave one start backward, and the cup was just passing out of his hands. Passing *into whose?* Into ours, to be drained forever, and ever, and ever! But, blessed be his name, the start and spasm were momentary; he grasped the cup again and said, in tones which thrilled every leaf in the garden, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

Death is often at once the close and the epitome of life. It is the index at the end of the volume. All the man's properties seem to rush round him as he is about to leave the world. This was eminently true of Christ. How emphatically he was himself in the judgment-hall and on the Cross! His reticence became a silence like that of a dumb spirit, at which Pilate trembled. His gentleness swelled into the godlike, as he healed the servant's ear, or said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." His dignity seems to have risen, like a mountain-wave, under the marks of contempt which were heaped upon him. His humility and submission assumed an air of Atlantean grandeur, as the burden of the world's atonement at length lay fully on his shoulders. And power never, not even when he rebuked the waves, or rode into Jerusalem, lay so legibly on his forehead or in his eye, as when he hung upon the tree. The Cross was the meeting-place, not only of all the attributes of Godhead, here reconciled through its "witty invention," but of all the attributes of Christ's princely manhood.

The circumstances of his death were worthy of the character and of the object. While he hung suspended, the pulse of the universe seemed now to stand still in collapse, and now to run on with the fiery haste of a feverous paroxysm. There was a great earthquake, which opened the adjacent graves, and startled the slumbers of the dead within them. The rocks were rent as by a burning hand, and it seemed as if the same hand passed along to tear the vail of the Temple in sunder. About the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour, and the sun was darkened. And most wonderful of all, a poor ruffian soul, shivering on the brink of destruc-

tion, was, in the very depth of the world-tragedy, snatched, like a brand from the burning, by the nailed and bleeding arm of the sufferer.

It was meet that a deep darkness, expressing the anger of God, the evil of sin, and the anguish of the Savior, should cover the earth—that nature, unable to look upon the features of her expiring Lord, should throw a vail over the scene and the sufferer. Nay, is it a conception too daring that this darkness covered the universe, that "all the bright lights of heaven" were darkened over the Cross, that not one orb ventured to shine while the "Bright and Morning Star" was under eclipse, that from Christ's dying brow the shadow swept over suns, constellations, and firmaments, till for three hours, save the throne of the Eternal, all was gloom? Be this as it may, when the vail was removed, how strange the revelation! There hung the Savior, dead; there were the two thieves, in the agonies of approaching dissolution; farther on, were the multitudes, with rage, fear, and gratified revenge, contending on their faces; and farther on still, the towers of the city, the pinnacles of the temple, and the distant hills, all shining out as in a new-born radiance. For now the battle was over, the victory won, the darkness past, the salvation finished, the Savior himself away, already rejoicing in the bowers and blessedness of the paradise of God.

But we must withdraw our feet from a ground so holy, and so mysteriously shadowed, as that surrounding the Cross of Christ. Silence here is devotion; and where wonder is so fully fed, it must be silent. Much as we admire the pictorial art, we do not like pictures of the death of Christ. There was a painter, in ancient Greece, who sought to represent the grief of Agamemnon at the death of his daughter, Iphigenia. How did he represent it? He gained the praises of all antiquity, and of all time, by not doing it at all. He drew a curtain over the face of the agonized parent. Thus let us, in imitation of the universe, draw a curtain over the solemn, the unfathomable scene.

Christ, in the grave, presents softer and less terrible points of

view. He lies down wearied, exhausted, alone, but triumphant —"like a warrior taking his rest." A guard of soldiers watches his sepulcher; but angels are watching there too, and the soft shadows of their wings give a mild sublimity to the new tomb. It is a high glad day throughout the invisible moral creation. Christ's work is done. The great redemption is complete. The Savior's body "sleeps well." His spirit is preaching to the spirits in prison. The morrow shall dawn upon his resurrection. And therefore the sun eclipsed yesterday is shining with a serene and cheerful ray. And perhaps all, except the murderers and the grieved disciples, feel an unaccountable joy running in their veins, as if some vast shadow and burden had passed away from them and from the world—as if a danger of mysterious magnitude had been somehow escaped, and a deliverance somehow wrought of incalculable meaning. Even now beautiful days sometimes stoop down upon us, like doves from heaven, and give us exquisite, though short-lived pleasure—in which earth appears "a pensive, but a happy place," the sky the dome of a temple, Eden recalled, and the millennium anticipated. But surely this Sabbath, as it is floated softly and slowly to the west, seemed to be "covered with silver, and its feathers with yellow gold," and to wear on its wings the smile which had rested on the young world, when God pronounced it "very good." And were there not heard in the air, above the hill of Olives, or down the valley of Jehoshaphat, or amid the trees of Gethsemane, snatches of celestial music, words of mystic song, proclaiming that the jubilee of earth had awakened the sympathies and the responses of heaven, and that the "young-eyed cherubim" were rehearsing the melody they are to sing on the morrow in full chorus, when the scarcely buried Savior is to spring up, as from sleep, to honor, glory, and immortality?

But, without dwelling on the other poetical events of his history—on the morning when he rose early from the grave—on his mysterious and fluctuating sojourn for forty days on earth, after his resurrection (as if he loved to linger in and haunt that dear spot, and deferred his very glory to the last moment,

for the sake of his disciples)—on that immortal journey to Emmaus—on his ascension far above all heavens, arising from the hill of Olives, with no chariot of fire, or horses of fire, but in his own native might and instinctive tendency upward—on his entrance and his session at the right hand of God—we come to speak of the poetry which cleaves to those wondrous words which he has left behind him.

The manner of Christ's life, as he uttered his parables and other sayings, was in the highest degree poetical. It was the life of a stranger on this earth, of a wanderer, of one who had no home but the house not made with hands, which he had himself built. Hence we identify his image with nature, and ever see him on lonely roads, midnight mountains, silent or stormy lakes, fields of corn, or the deep wildernesses of his country. Every step trod by the old seers, was retrod by him, as if to efface their fiery vestiges, and make the regions, over which they had swept like storms, green again. He was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel, but he more than once approached to the very boundaries of his allotted field. We find him, for instance, in the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon, straying by a mightier sea than that of Tiberias, and lifting his eyes to a loftier summit than that of Tabor. "He must needs" see Lebanon, as well as pass through Samaria. His were not, indeed, journeys of sentiment, but of mercy; and yet, why should he not have gazed with rapture upon the peaceful, the pure, and the lofty, in the works, while he did the will, of God? This was, peradventure, the chief source of his solace amid suffering and weariness. He was not recognized by men, but the lilies of the field looked up meaningly in his face, the "waters perceived him—they saw him well," the winds lingered amid his hair, the sunbeams smiled on his brow, the landscape from the summit seemed to crouch lovingly at his feet, and the stars from their far thrones to bend him down obeisance. He, and he alone, of all men, felt at home in nature, and able to see it, and call it, "My father's house." He felt not warmed by, but warming the sun—not walking in the light of, but enlightening

the world, and could look on its great orbs as but the "many mansions" for his spiritual seed. Of all men he only (mentally and morally) *stood erect*, and this divine uprightness it was which turned the world upside down. The poetical point of view of nature, is not that of distant admiration or of cold inquiry, it is that of sympathy, amounting to immersion; the poet's soul is shed, like a drop, into creation; but this process was never fully completed, save in one—in him who uttered the Sermon on the Mount.

Fancy has sometimes revolved the question, were nature to burst into words—were the blue sky to speak—what words would best translate its old smiling silence? To men bending, and willing to bend, below its quiet, surpassing grandeur, what sounds more cheering and cognate than were these—"Blessed are the *poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?*" *These* are the first words from the mount. The first recorded word of the Divine Man is a blessing; and a blessing on those who feel their littleness, as the condition and element of their being, and a blessing which fills the void of the poor, humble heart with Heaven. Just as the sky seems to whisper—"Bend, but bend—learn, only learn—listen, but listen—and all mine are thine, and with galaxies shall I crown thy lowly head." And as the beatitudes multiply, you feel more at every sentence that they are from the deep heart of the universe, and that this is God interpreting himself. Who but himself could have named that eye which can alone to eternity see him—the cleansed and filial heart? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see God*."

Demonstrate a God to the atheist, or the worldling, or the sensual! Alas! such persons never had, and may never have, a God, and how can they be conscious of him? God must either be a Father, or a fierce, overwhelming, Infinite *Thought*—a justice and a terror—crushing his enemies under *their own* one-sided idea of him. But the pure and warm heart feels the Father, like a sweet scent in the evening air—like the presence of a friend in the dark twilight room—like a melody entering

within and sweetening all the soul, which has leaped half-way to meet it.

The heart here, the Father yonder, and the universe of man and matter as the meeting-place between them, is the whole scope and the whole poetry of the Sermon on the Mount. The preacher shears off all the superfluities and externals of worship and of action, that he may show, in its naked simplicity, the communion which takes place between the heart as worshiper, and God as hearer. The righteousness he inculcates must exceed that "of the Scribes and the Pharisees." The man who hates his brother, or calls him "Raca," is a murderer in seed. Adultery first lurks and swelters in the heart. Oaths are but big sounds; the inner feelings are better represented by "Yea, yea, nay, nay." That love which resides within will walk through the world as men walk through a gallery of pictures, loving and admiring, and expecting no return. The giving of alms must be secret. The sweetest prayer will be solitary and short. One must fast, too, as if he fasted not. The enduring treasures must be laid up within. Righteousness must be sought before, and as inclusive of, all things; life is more precious than all the means of it. The examination and correction of faults must begin at home. Prayer, if issuing from the heart, is all-powerful. The essence of the law and prophets lies in doing to others as we would have others do to us. Having neglected the inner life, the majority have gone to ruin, even while following fully and devotedly external forms of faith and worship. The heart must, at the same time, be known by its fruits. It is only the good worker that shall enter the heavenly kingdom. These truths, in fine, acted upon—those precepts from the Mount, heard and done—become a rock of absolute safety, while all besides is sand now, and sea hereafter.

Such is, in substance, this sermon. It includes unconsciously all theology and all morals, and is invested, besides, with the beauty of imagery—theology—for what do we know, or can we ever know, of God, but that he is "our Father in heaven," that he accepts our heart-worship, forgives our debts, and hears our

earnest prayers—morals, for as all sin lies in selfishness, all virtue lies in losing our petty identity in the great river of the species, which flows into the ocean of God; and as to imagery, how many natural objects—the salt of the sea, the lilies of the valley, the thorns of the wilderness, the trees of the field, the hairs of the head, the rocks of the mountain, and the sand of the sea-shore—combine to explain and to beautify the deep lessons conveyed! Here is, verily, the model—long sought elsewhere in vain—of a "perfect sermon," which ought to speak of God and of man in words and figures borrowed from that beautiful creation, which lies between, which adumbrates the former to the latter, and enables the latter to glorify at once the works and the Author. "Here is Christianity," we exclaim, and remember with pleasure the experiences of a gifted spirit, who was wont, after attending certain meetings, professedly meant to revive religion, but full of degrading rant and vain contortion, to re-assure his spirit in its belief of Jesus by reading, himself alone, the Sermon on the Mount.

Fitly does the Teacher close his sermon by the parable of the two men, the two houses, and the two foundations. The two great classes of mankind are but too easily represented by two individuals—the selfish and the spiritual man—the one building perhaps a palace on the sand, the other perhaps a cottage on the rock, and each receiving his appropriate reward. The palace (be it a poem, or a victory, or a grand discovery), if the sand of selfishness be beneath it, sinks inevitably, and men, angels, demons, and God, say of it—"Great is its fall." The cottage (perhaps one humble heart, united by the builder to Jesus—perhaps figured aptly by a cup of cold water given to a disciple, or by a dying word, like that of the penitent thief) stands securer far than the sun, and shall shine when he is darkness. At the close of this parable of parables, do we not see evil gone down, and lost in the abyss; while good remains imperishable upon its rock of ages?

The Sermon on the Mount represents faithfully the two principal features of Christ's preaching—its didactic basis, and the

parabolic beauty which shone above. In it we find those two qualities united; in his after-discourses we find them more in separation. In the Gospel of Luke, for instance, we have little else than parables proceeding from his lips; in John, his didacticism takes a higher flight than in Matthew, and wears a celestial luster upon her wings. In the Sermon on the Mount, he had soared high above Sinai; but in the closing discourses to his disciples, recorded in John, he leaves us, like the men of Galilee, "standing and gazing up into heaven." In his Sermon on the Mount, he had dwelt chiefly upon the general relations of men to the Father; the discourses in John illustrate rather *his own* special and transcendent connection with him.

Let us glance, first, at his parables, which are a poetry in themselves. Truth, half betrayed in beauty, half shrouded in mystery, is the essence of a parable. It is the truth wishing to be loved, ere she ventures forth to be worshiped and obeyed. The multitude of Christ's parables is not so wonderful as their variety, their beauty, their brevity, and the sweet or fearful pictures which they paint at once and forever upon the soul. Here we see the good Samaritan riding toward his inn, with his wounded brother before him. There, lingeringly, doubtingly, like a truant boy at evening, returns the prodigal son to his father, whose arms, at his threshold, stretched out, seem wishing for wings to expedite the joyous meeting. In that field stalks the sower, graver than sowers are wont to be in the merry season of spring. On the opposite side, the fisherman, with joyful face, is drawing ashore his heavy-laden net. With yet keener ecstasy depicted on his countenance, you see the merchantman lighting on a pearl of pearls, while across from him is the treasure-finder, with circumspective and fearful looks, hiding his precious prize. And, lo! how, under the dim canopy of night, shadowing the barely-budding field of wheat, steals a crooked and winged figure, trembling lest the very darkness see him—*the enemy*—scattering tares in huddled abundance among the wheat. The morning comes; but, while revealing the rank tares growing among the good seed, it reveals also the large mus-

tard-tree which has shot up with incredible swiftness, "so that the fowls of the air do build in the branches thereof." Here you see a woman mixing leaven with her meal till the whole lump is leavened; and there another woman, sweeping the room, how fast, yet intensely, for her lost piece of silver. There the servant of the marriage-host is compelling the wanderers from the hedges to come in, his face all glowing with amiable anger and kindly coercion; and yonder, in the distance, with anxious eye and crook in his hand, hies the shepherd into the twilight desert, in search of his "lost sheep." And, hark! as the marriage-feast has begun, and the song of holy merriment is just rising on the evening air, there comes a voice, strangely concerting with it, hollow as the grave—a whispered thunder. It is the voice of Dives, saying—"Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am *tormented in this flame*."

In such figures, Jesus has exhausted life, earth, eternity. The small seed from which all greatness buds; the supreme beauty of compassion, even when found in foreign and unenlightened breasts; the touch of nature, making the whole world kin; the joy and glory connected with the recovery of the lost; the unseen but awfully real agency of evil counteracting good in this present world; the all-embracing and pains-taking love of the Great Host and Father; the fact that men must sometimes be driven to their own happiness; the dignity and value of a lost soul, or a lost world; the feelings connected with finding a truth, and wrapping it up as too precious or bright for the present time; the yearning of the Father over his vagrant children, and his joy at their return; the reception the Savior was to receive when he came to save the lost; the leap by which the laws of earth pass into the unseen world; the sympathies of the departed with living men; and the sufficiency and soleness of the means God has appointed;—such are the fancy-wrought and fire-written lessons of the parables of Jesus Christ.

The marriage of the highest truth and human interest was never so fully celebrated as here. Hence, while divines find

those parables to sink into a profundity into which they can not follow, children hang them up, like pictures, in their fancies and hearts. From them, too, has sprung an entire literature, including some of the master-pieces of modern genius. Dante's "Divina Comedia," Spenser's "Faery Queen," and Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," are the long-reverberated and eloquent echoes of the wayside words of the Divine Carpenter of Nazareth.

"Divine," indeed! for if any man doubt his claim to the title, let him pass from Christ's pictures of earth to his aspirations after heaven; let him hear the musical pants of this great swimmer, as he is nearing, amid roughest water, the shores of eternity and his Father's bosom. The last words of Jesus are surcharged with feeling for his disciples, forgiveness to his enemies, and desire after renewed communion with his Father. His soul springs up, as he sees his Father's throne in view. Death dwindles as he looks onward. A smile of triumph rests, as by anticipation, upon his lips. "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." His last command is, "that ye love one another;" his last legacy is "peace." He is going to the Father, but leaving the Comforter, and promising to return again; and, ere going, he breaks out into a prayer which, ere it closes, seems to bind in one chain of glory earth and heaven, himself, his Father, and his people: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." This prayer seems a specimen of his intercessory prayers in heaven. It is the first lifting up of that solemn voice which sweetens the air of Paradise—the first raising of those arms which brighten the very light which is inaccessible and full of glory.

In considering those words, we are strongly impressed with the feeling—this is the conscious link of the spiritual world—the living bond between the Father and his children. The Father can never on earth come nearer us than him; we can

never get nearer than him to the Father. We know not what the eternal ages may develop, or how that mysterious sentence, "Then shall the Son of Man also himself be subject unto him, that God may be All in All," may bear upon his future mediation; but surely now he stands between us and the beams of divine day, like an "Angel in the sun." There is no getting him out of the eye of the world. The poor sinner looks at him, and mourns, yet rejoices. The proud transgressor hates and foams, but can not help looking at, and thinking of, Christ. The infidel, feeling him in his way, invents theory after theory, each trampling down each, to resolve him into clay or into mist; but still he stands victorious and serene above them all, inscrutable as an enigma, vast as a God, and warm as a man. The fierce theoretical dogmatist would seek to turn aside that smile, and fix it on the pages of *his* catechism and the men of *his* creed; but, like summer sunlight, it scatters abroad and "sprinkles many nations." Many look down, and strive to forget him; some try to look above him, into supersolar regions; but in vain. His image pursues them into the depths, or flies before them into the heights of nature. In this age, only a few, even among those who disbelieve his claims, yell out faded blasphemies and foul calumnies against his name. More now of all kindreds and climes are beginning to wish this Angel to descend, and are expecting from him—and from him alone—the full solution of the dread mystery of man and the world.

For why? He only understands it. He has passed up every step of the ladder, from the child to the God, from the manger to the throne. He has felt the pulse of all being. He listened to the hearts of harlots and of publicans, and heard humanity beating even there. He looked into the dim eyes of the poor, and saw therein the image of God. Even in devils he found out all that was left of good in their natures, when they confessed him to be the Son of God. While the long hair of the prostitute wiped his feet, which her tears had watered, the eye of the lunatic tarried, at his bidding, from its wild wanderings,

and began to roll calmly around him. Herod became grave in his presence, Pilate washed his hands from the shadow of his blood, Peter wept at his look, and Judas died at his recollection. Angels ministered to him, or sung his praise; the grave was ashamed of hiding his dust; earth threw his ransomed body up to heaven; and heaven sent forth all its guards, and opened all its gates, to receive him into its bosom, where it shall retain him till the times of the restitution of all things.

Thus faintly have we sought to depict the character and eloquence of Jesus. Scripture writers did not, nor needed to do it. They never say, in so many words, Christ was very eloquent, very wise, very humble, very merciful, or very holy. But they record his Sermon on the Mount; they show him taking the Pharisees in their own snare; they register his tears at the tomb of Lazarus; they paint the confusion of the witnesses, who came, but could not bear testimony against him; and they tell of his washing his disciples' feet. We have, alas! no new facts to record of him; and must say of that life so marvelous, yet humane, "It is finished." But even as the most splendid object in the sky is perpetually painted, yet always new, as the sun is unceasingly rendered back by the wave of ocean, the dew-drop, and the eye of man, so let it be with the Sun of Righteousness. Let his blessed image be reflected from page to page, each catching more fully than another some aspect of his glory, till he shall himself stand before the trembling mirror of the earth, "as he is," and till "every eye shall see him." Then, probably, it may be found that all the proud portraits which the genius of Taylor, and Harris, and Rousseau, and Goethe, has drawn of him, are not comparable with that cherished likeness of his face and nature which lies in the bosom of the lowly Christian, like a star in a deep-sunken well, the more glorious that it is solitary and seldom seen, forever trembling, but never passing away.

Note.—Since writing this chapter, we have read Dr. Channing's Life. We find in one of his letters two of our thoughts anticipated; one, that of Christ's unconsciousness in working his miracles, and another, his «

periority to them. He says, "Miracle working was to him nothing, compared with moral energy." And this, he says, produced his unconsciousness. We rather think that *that* was the result of the miraculous force stored up in him, and which, in *certain circumstances*, as when it met with strong faith, came forth freely and irresistibly, as water to the diviner's rod, or perspiration to the noonday sun. But it was not because it came out so spontaneously that Christ rated it low, but because its effects were the mere scaffolding to his ulterior purpose. We advise every one to read the last thirty pages of the second volume of Channing's Life. They constitute the finest apology for the *reality* of Christ we ever read, and show deep insight into his nature. They show that Hall's definition of Unitarianism—that its whole secret consists in thinking meanly of Christ—did not at least apply to Channing

CHAPTER XIV.

PAUL.

It was asked of old time, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" it may be asked now, is Paul also among the poets? Wonderful as this is, it is no less certain. A poet of the first order Paul was, if force of thought, strength of feeling, power of imagination (without an atom of fancy), heaving ardor of eloquence, and energy of language, go to constitute a poet.

The degree in which Paul possesses the logical faculty, the extreme vigor and keenness of his understanding, have blinded many to the power of his genius, just as, on the contrary, with many writers, the luxuriance and splendor of their imagination have vailed from common critical view the subtilty and strength of their insight. In the one case, the eye of the cherub is so piercing, that we never look up to the wings; in the other, the wings are so vast and overshadowing, that they conceal from us the eye. The want of fancy, besides, which we have indicated, and the severe restraint in which he usually holds his imagination, till his intellectual processes are complete, have aided the general impression that Paul, though acute always, and often eloquent, is never poetical. Whereas, in fact, his logic is but the buckler on his arm, behind which you see the ardent eyes and the glittering breastplate of a poet-hero, worthy of mingling with the highest chivalry of ancient song, with Isaiah and Ezekiel, with Habakkuk and with Joel. It was a poet's eye, although glaring and bloodshot, that witnessed the first martyrdom—a poet's eye that was smote into blindness on the way to Damascus—that looked from Mars Hill, over that

transcendent landscape and motley audience—and that, caught up to Paradise, saw the visions of God, and, according to some, was ever afterward weakened by the blaze. He *nearly* fulfilled to the letter the words since figuratively applied to Milton, who

> "Passed the bounds of flaming space,
> Where angels tremble as they gaze,
> Who saw, and blasted by the excess of light,
> Closed his eyes in endless night."

In Paul, first, we find art arrested and pressed into the service of Christianity—a conscious and cultured intellect devoting itself to plead the cause of heaven—the genius of the East, united with the acuteness and consecutive thought which distinguish the European mind. The utterances of the old prophets, of Jesus too, and of John, are artless as the words of a child. Even the loftiest and longest raptures of Isaiah are as destitute of *junctura* as the Proverbs of Solomon; the difference only is, that while Solomon walks calmly from stepping-stone to stepping-stone, Isaiah leaps from rock to rock, and peak to peak. The words of Jesus, when mild, come forth disconnected as a stream of smiles—when terrible, are successive, but separate, flashes of forked lightning. Paul alone, of Scripture writers, aims at composition in his system, his description, and his style. His system is a dark but rounded orb; in description, he essays to group objects together; and the style of the chief part of his principal Epistles is an intertangled chain. We might conceive that meeting on the Damascene way to typify the contrast between intuition and analysis—the divine Intuitionist looking down from above—the baffled but mighty analyst falling like a dead man at his feet, to rise, however, and to unite in himself a large portion of both powers, to blend the learning and logic of Gamaliel the schoolmaster, with the light streaming from the face of Jesus, the child.

Here we see how exquisitely wise was the selection of Paul, at that point of the history of the new religion, to become its

ambassador to the West. The first enthusiasm of its youth was fading, and the power of the first impulse from on high had necessarily, in some measure, spent itself. The miraculous glory surrounding its head was destined gradually to decay. That it might, nevertheless, continue to live and spread—that it might pass in its power into the midst of those cultivated countries, where it was sure at every step to be challenged, it must assume an elaborate shape, and find a learned advocate. A Paul was needed; and a Paul was found, nay, enlisted into the service, not by any subaltern officer, but by the Great Captain himself. There is no evidence that he was deeply read in Grecian lore—had he been so, we should have had thirty instead of three quotations from the Pagan poets; nor that he was ever trained to the study of the Grecian dialects; but his intellect, naturally acute to subtilty, was subjected to the somewhat severely intellectual processes which then abounded in the *Jewish* schools; and he was thus qualified to reason and wind a way for Christianity, where the force of miracle, or the instant lightning of intuitive feeling, were not at hand to cut and cleave it. The religion of Jesus passed through the East like a ray through an unrefracting medium; when it came westward, it found an atmosphere to be penetrated, and a Pauline power to penetrate it by bending, yet remaining pure as a sunbeam.

When Paul arose, Christianity was in a state of disarray. The manna was fallen from heaven, and lay white on the ground, but was not gathered nor condensed. Had it been designed for a partial or temporary purpose, this had been comparatively of little importance. But, as it was meant to tarry till the master should come, it was necessary that it should assume a shape so symmetrical, and a consistence so great, that no sun of civilization or keen inquiry could melt it. For this purpose, Paul was stopped, and struck down, and blinded, and raised up, and cured, and taken like his master into the wilderness (of Arabia), and brought back, and commissioned, and preserved, and sent to Athens and to Rome, and inspired with those dark yet wondrous Epistles of his—parts of which seem

to preserve certain great half-utterable truths *in frost*, till the final spring shall come.

Some even of Paul's friends have regretted the analytical cast which the intuitional religion of the "Carpenter" took from his hands, and have said, "not Paul, but Jesus." There are several reasons why we can not concur with them in this. First, The intuitional element was not lost, it was only exhibited in another form: the manna was that which had fallen from heaven; it was only formed into cakes by a master hand. Secondly, Intuitional impression can never circulate widely nor long, unless it thus be condensed; bullion is sluggish—money goes; heaps of manna sometimes stank—the small cakes refreshed and revived the eaters. Even Christ's words required Paul's emphasis and accentuation. Thirdly, All genuine intuition and inspiration seek, and at last find, an artistic or systematic expression. Nature herself struggles after unity, and after completeness of beauty. Every flower seems arrested on its way to higher elegance and more ethereal hues. Every tree seems stretching out its branches in quest of some yet rounder termination. So with thought of all varieties of excellence and of truth. The severely logical desires a vesture of beauty. The beautifully imaginative desires a clothing of clay. Not always is either appetency granted. But no religion, at least, can have a permanent place and power in the world, unless it appeal alike to the ideal and the artistic, display the eternal spirit, and assume the earthly shape. To Christianity, Jesus supplied the one, and Paul the other. Fourthly, Such a *descent*, as it may be called, from Jesus the child, to Paul the logician, was necessary, both as an interpretation of that part of Christianity which was destined to endure, and as a substitute for that part of it doomed to weaken and wane. Christianity, the spiritual power, was to remain; but Christianity, the miraculous force, was to decline. Paul's system was to contain the essence of the one, and to conserve so much as was conservable of the relict influence of the other. Fifthly, As in part remarked before, it was of importance to Christianity that it should triumph

over a man of culture. Simple fishermen it had in plenty; but it needed to show how it could subdue an intellectual and educated man; how it should, in the process, reconcile the warring elements in his nature, and bring to him what no study could ever bring—peace amid his majestic powers. In other words, the intellectual progress of the age and the new religion must be reconciled, and they were reconciled accordingly; not merely in a *compact and complete theory*, but *in a living man*—and that man was Paul. *This, too, is the great problem of the present time.* To have *our* mental progress reconciled with Christianity, not only by such an elaborate system as Coleridge died in building, but also by a living synthesis—a breathing bridge—the new Chalmers of the new time, forming in himself the herald of the mightier one, whose sandals even he shall be unworthy to unloose: this is what the wiser of Christians, and the more devout of philosophers, are at present longing and panting to see.

Of such a man, who shall lay the ground-plan? We can not describe him into existence. Yet we may state certain qualities which the Paul of the present must possess, as the Paul of a former day did. He must be a converted man. That is, he must have seen, in a blaze of blinding light, the vanity and evil, the folly and madness, of the worldly or selfish, and the grandeur and truth of the disinterested and Christian life. He must, in a glare of illumination, have beheld himself, with all his faculties and accomplishments, as but a garlanded victim, to be sacrificed for man and to God. This Paul learned on the way to Damascus, and he acted ever afterward on the lesson. He must be, again, a man who has gifts and accomplishments to sacrifice. He must be able to meet age on its own terms, and to talk to it in its own dialect. He must speak from between a double peak, from the height of a commanding intellect, and from that of a lofty mission. He must render it impossible for any one to look down upon him. The king himself may be, as we have called him, a divine and eternal child; but the embassador and herald must

be, like Paul, a furnished man. He must, again, have undergone great struggles, been made perfect through suffering—perhaps fallen into many and grievous sins. He may have been years without hope, and without God, in the world. He may have entertained fierce, impure, and wasting passions, comparable to that rage which filled the heart of Saul of Tarsus. He may, unlike Saul, have sacrificed the letter as well as the spirit of the law. All these are only inverted qualifications for his great office. They prove him human—they evince experience—they secure in him, and for him, widest sympathies, and show him to possess a fellow-feeling with our infirmities. We find, again, that the Paul of the past had a deep interest and love for his unbelieving brethren. They were counted as brethren, though they were unbelievers. He had been an unbeliever himself, and had been saved from unbelief by a special and marvelous interference. But there remained in him still a compassion for his brethren that were without. "Therefore," he says, "he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart." The Paul of the present should have his heart distended by a similar emotion. We say not that he should have ever crossed the boundaries of unbelief, but he should have neared them. Unless he has neared them, in this distracted time, it is clear that he has never thought at all. And although we could accept an angel who had only *seen*, we can not accept an apostle unless he has reflected, reasoned, doubted, and then believed. And the man who has ever had deep and sincere doubt, will always afterward regard it with interest and sympathy, as the tomb of his now risen and renewed being, and extend the sympathy to those who are still inclosed. A Paul disbelieved once, and pitied unbelief ever afterward. A Coleridge doubted once, and became the spiritual father of many bewildered doubters. A Hall was once a materialist, and buried (gravely and reverently) materialism in his father's grave. An Arnold fought for years with doubts, and his last words were the words of Christ to doubting Thomas. The thinker of the new era must, probably, have gained truth

through yet darker avenues than theirs, and be able almost to bless them, because they led to a fuller and brighter day The Paul of the past united reverence for the extant record with a keen perception of the wants of the new era, and the spirit of the new dispensation. Like Jesus, he said, "It hath been said unto you by them of old time;" and then proceeded to express the old watchwords in the tones and the spirit of his own time. So must the Paul of the present. He must study philosophy, gaze on nature, and wait the descending inspiration, leaning the while over the page of the New Testament. Many, ignoring this as either never having been true, or as having *become* false (as if any truth could ever become a falsehood, any more than a lie a truth), are wasting their voice, like Baal's prophets, in crying to deaf elements, and a sleeping Pantheistic God. Others are going about our streets, like well-meaning but beslept watchmen, calling the hours of midnight, while the morning is paling their lanterns. Our Paul, while loving the "pale light of stars," must feel and announce the dawning of the day. Finally, the Paul of the present, thus endowed, thus educated, and thus impressed, must address himself, as did the Paul of old, to form a version or system of Christianity, which may be reconciled, or at least appear *reconcilable*, to science and philosophy. He must elaborate from the Scriptures a mirror in which the great twofold Cosmos of matter and mind shall be seen "as it is." He must proclaim the approaching nuptials of spiritual beauty and philosophic truth. And without daring to prognosticate the entire course of thought which shall form the reconciling medium, we may express our notion of certain conditions which it must premise. First, In attempting such a synthesis, much which clings to, without being, Christianity must be sacrificed or ignored by the Christian thinker. He must give up party bias, narrow views, the inordinate esteem of creeds, the overbearing influence of tradition, bibliolatry, or worship of that "letter which killeth," and all those views of doctrine which prove themselves false, by being opposed to the instincts and intuitions, alike of cul-

tured and uncultured man—alike of peasant, analytic philosopher, and inspired poet. He must, too, for reasons good and sufficient, lay less stress on miracles as *proofs* than many do, but every thing on them as *pledges* which Christ is to redeem, and as *specimens* of his future supernatural interference. Secondly, He must take his firm stand upon *the Book*, believing it, as he believes the sun, on account of its superiority, its unwaning splendor, its power, its adaptation to man's present nature, intellect, and wants—an adaptation, like that of light, ever fixed, yet ever fluctuating, its simplicity, unity, and depth —because it is the record of man's deepest intuitions and earliest beliefs—because it is the best manual we have of genuine morality and devotion, and because its insight mounts ever and anon to prophetic inspiration, and to preternatural knowledge alike of the past and the future, and because, therefore, it can only go down or perish with the present system of things. At the same time, he will grant that the book is not perfect, nor ultimate, nor complete. Enough, that it fills its sphere and illuminates its cycle, till a brighter luminary shall dawn. Thirdly, He must mark strongly the many points of connection between God's two revelations, while granting the striking diversities. Admitting that there is a greater strength and quantity of evidence for God's works in nature, than for the Scriptures—that the Bible can not be equaled in point of vastness and variety to the universe—that both are surrounded with deep difficulty and darkness—that the superiority of the Bible lies principally in the hope and aspiration it enkindles as to future discoveries, as well as in the present peace its doctrine of atonement communicates to the conscience; —he will see that both are mediatory in their character—that neither is final—that the difficulties of both spring from this imperfection of attitude—that both are transient—that to love, or know, or believe either aright, a certain moral discipline is necessary—that, except one become as a little child, he can in no wise enter either into the kingdom of nature or into the kingdom of heaven—and that both, springing from the same author,

regulating the one the intellect, and the other the conscience of men, meditating in divers ways between man and the Infinite, must sooner or later form a conjunction. So long as the philosopher holds nature to be an ultimate fact—to be, in other words, God—he can never believe in the Bible, nor in the *Bible's* God. So long as the Christian believes the Bible to be aught else than a tent in which the Everlasting tabernacles for a night, he can never understand or love the universe or its Creator. Grant that both are embassadors, destined to retire before their King, and it becomes plain that their difficulties and their opposition to each other must also disappear. Fourthly, He must inculcate the necessity of great concessions on both sides, ere there can be even an approach to a union. The philosopher must concede that Christianity is a fact, not a fable—a living power, not a dead imposture—that it arose and spread in the world so suddenly and irresistibly, as to imply a divine impulse—that its peculiar sway over the moral nature is as incontestable as that of the moon over the tides—that the belief in its supernatural claims is still extant among many of the most cultured and intellectual of men—and that, whatever he may think of its external evidences, it is the one most beneficial emanation from God that ever shone on earth. The Christian, besides those earthly incrustations around the virgin gold of his faith, which we have said he must remove, should be prepared to admit that science and philosophy are valuable and beautiful in themselves —that they are true, so far as they go—that their truth is *independent* of Scripture, and must stand or fall by its own evidence—that their real tendency is good—and that, like religion, they are "sprung from heaven." When such concessions, and others, are mutually made, and when, moreover, a spirit of forbearance and charity is interfused, the ground of difference will be marvelously narrowed, and the bans of the great bridal shall be published. Teach men to *love*, and they will *understand*. Once the Christian learns to love, instead of fearing, he will accept philosophy. Once the philosopher is taught to love, instead of hating Christianity, he will cease to consider its loftiest

pretensions as absurd, and its profoundest mysteries as formidable. Finally, The Reconciler must look forward for the full accomplishment of the work to the interference of supernatural power. He may publish the bans; another shall celebrate the full marriage. At this hope, false philosophy may writhe its withered lips in scorn; the true will remember, that there have been separate creations innumerable, implying distinct interferences of God, in the ages of geology; and why should there not be another to make man again upright—to rear up the ruins of his brain, and the deeper ruins of his heart, into a shapely whole—to silence the jarring voices of this unsettled age by the musical thunder of a new word from heaven—to supplant usurped, feeble, or tyrannical authority, by a solitary throne, the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands"—and to melt down philosophy and faith into the one blaze of vision? Not till then shall men see the full spectacle of the *magnificent apparition* of the *universe*, with *Christianity*, like a divine halo, *surrounding* its *head*.

Too far have we perhaps been tempted to stray, in search of the Paul of the present, from the Paul of the past. We return to him, for the purpose of depicting a few more of the many powers and peculiarities which distinguished his multiform nature. The man demands a more particular survey, ere we come to the characteristics of the Author. And let us mark the kindliness of that heart which lay below the sunlike splendor of his genius. This is written in his letter to Philemon; it lives in his interview with the elders of Ephesus, and breaks out irrepressibly in many parts of his Epistles. It adds grace to his grandeur, and makes his doctrines alike divine and humane. The power of a demigod is hardly more amiable than that of a demon, unless it be softened by touches of nature, and mellowed by the air of earth. A Paul too proud for tears had never turned the world upside down. But to "such an one as Paul the aged" asking such a question as "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" and wishing himself accursed for the sake of his unbelieving brethren, all hearts bu

the hardest are ready to capitulate. Paul's tears effected what his thunders, his learning, and his logic would not so quickly have done. Great as the difference between man and man, is that between tear and tear. The tears of Isaiah must have been fiery and rainbow-beaming as his genius; David's must have been mingled with blood; Jeremiah's must have been copious and soft as a woman's; Ezekiel's must have been wild and terrible tears. Of those of Jesus, what can we say, save that the glory of his greatness and the mildness of his meek humanity must have met in every drop. And Paul's, doubtless, were slow, quiet, and large, as his profound nature.

An old poet has quaintly called Jesus "The first true gentleman that ever breathed." Paul's politeness, too, must not be overlooked, compounded as it was of dignity and deference. It appeared in the mildness of the manner in which he delivered his most startling and shattering messages, both to Jews and heathens; in his graceful salutations; in his winning reproofs—the "excellent oil which did not break the head;" in the delicacy of his allusions to his own claims and services; and, above all, in the calm, self-possessed and manly attitude he assumed before the rulers of his people and the Roman authorities. In the language of Peter and John to their judges, there is an abruptness savoring of their rude fisherman life, and fitter for the rough echoes of the lake of Galilee than for the tribunals of power. But Paul, while equally bold and decided, is far more gracious. He lowers his thunderbolt before his adversary ere he lanches it. His shaft is "polished," as well as powerful. His words to king Agrippa —"I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds"—are the most chivalric utterances recorded in history. An angel could not bend more gracefully, or assume an attitude of more exalted courtesy. And certain we are, that, had his sermon before Felix been preserved, it had been a new evidence of his perfect politeness. No Nathan or John Knox-like downright directness in it. In his captive circum-

stances, this had been offensive. No saying, in so many words, "Thou art the man!" (no pointing even with his finger or significant glance with his eye); but a grave, calm, impersonal argument on "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," which, as it "sounded on its way," sounded the very soul of the governor, and made him tremble, as if a cold hand from *above* had been suddenly laid on his heart. Paul's sermon he felt to the core, trembled at, and shrank from but no more resented than if he had read it in the pages of a dead author. Paul's eye *might* have increased his tremor, but could no more have excited his wrath than can those eyes in pictures, which seem to follow our every motion, and to read our very soul, excite us to resentment or reprisal. And here, again, we notice a quality fitting Paul to be the Apostle of the West. Having to stand before governors and kings, and the emperor himself, he must be able to stand with dignity, or with dignity to fall.

In accordance with this, we find in Paul a curious union of prudence and impulse. He is the subtilest and the sincerest of men. Pure and mild as a planet, he has often a comet's winding course. Determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, he yet becomes "all things to all men." Yielding in circumstantials and *to* circumstances, on all essentials he is immovably firm, like those stones which an infant's finger can move, but no giant's arm can overthrow. It is not cringing subservience; it is not a base and low policy, such as has frequently been exemplified by leaders in the Christian Church, who have deemed themselves petty Pauls, but have been only miserable caricatures of his outer features. It is the more winding movement of a great river in calm, which, unlike a flood, does not overbear natural or artificial bulwarks, but kisses, and circles, and saps them into subjection. Without enlarging on his other and obvious qualities (on some of which Hannah More has dilated with her usual good sense and comprehension), such as his disinterestedness, balanced, however, by an intense feeling of his just rights and privileges; his integrity; his love to his kindred according to the flesh; his modesty; his thankfulness;

his heavenly-mindedness; his prayerfulness; his unwearied and almost superhuman activity; the proud humility with which, again and again, he took up the tools of his old trade; his condescension to men of low estate; his respect for *God in* the authorities he had appointed; his reverence for that system of Judaism which was old and fast vanishing away—for the very shell of that ark whence the Shekinah had gone up; his thirst for heaven; his calm and dignified expectation of the angel of death;—we pause at one point of his character, which is seldom noticed, we mean, his passion for Christ Jesus. This became the main feeling in the breast of the "persecutor." He had a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which was far better: "If by any means I might attain unto the *resurrection*"—that is, to him who said, "I am the resurrection and the life."—"I account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." Every third sentence of his Epistles, indeed, gleams with the name and glory of Christ. His feeling amounts to fascination. One might fancy that the face he had seen on the way to Damascus had ever afterward haunted his vision. It is not the distant throb of admiration, which he feels to Moses; it is the panting of one full of love. The heart of him who had only seen Christ as "one born out of due time," seems to heave in emulation of John, who had lain in his bosom, and of Peter, who had been with him on the holy mount. The flame is fanned, too, by another motive. He had spent years in hating and cursing Christ. In order to compensate for the time thus fearfully lost, there is a hurry in his affection—there is a flutter in his words of admiration—there is an anxiety to pour out his whole soul in love to Christ, as if economy of expression, measure of feeling, modification of tone, were treason to his claims. There is a determination—"I, the once bloody-minded Saul of Tarsus, shall be foremost, midst, and last, in proclaiming my love to him, whose faith I labored to destroy." It is beautiful to see Peter, John, and Paul, like three flames of holy fire, climbing higher and higher on the altar before the Crucified,

and to see at last Paul's pointed column, outsoaring the rest, and becoming "chief among the first three."

Was it for the sake of his aspiring and insatiable affection, that he was caught up to Paradise and to the third heavens? We may not dilate on that mysterious vision, on where he was, on what he saw, on how long he was absent, on what words he heard, since he himself remained silent. But no incident in his history casts a richer light upon the peculiarities of his character, his reticence, his modesty, and his power of subordinating all things to the practical purposes of his office. How calm the countenance, above which throbs a brain painted around with the visions of God! How tacit and guarded the tongue, which might have tried, at least, to stammer out the deep utterances of the blest! How unwilling to take to himself superior honor on account of his strange transfiguration! And, lest any should dream that he had recounted this trance merely to elevate himself to the rank of those who had been with Jesus in the chamber of Jairus, in the inner groves of Gethsemane, and on the mount, how careful and quick he is to point to the "thorn" which seemed to have been planted in his flesh in Paradise itself! And how cautious, too, he is, in not pronouncing—though probably his impression was strong—his judgment as to whether he had been in the body or out of the body when caught away! No privilege, however peculiar, or elevation, however lofty, could move the iron firmness of his purpose, or intoxicate his strong and sober spirit. The great analyst remained calm and clear-eyed, even while he worshiped and wondered at the foot of the throne.

In speaking of Paul's written eloquence, we must not forget that he was a speaker as well as a writer. It is customary to suppose his elocution bad, because certain Corinthians said that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. But, first, this was the language of prejudice. Again, those who uttered it were not probably fair judges. There were audiences who despised Foster—nay, who sneered at Chalmers and even Hall. "Wretched speaker," is a comment we have

overheard when returning from hearing a very rare exhibition of intellectual power and genuine eloquence. There are three kinds of true eloquence: the eloquence of passion and sympathy, the eloquence of intellect, and the eloquence of imagination. To the first of these, all hearts respond; the two last, of which Paul's was a compound, have only power upon selected spirits. And let us remember, that if the Corinthians despised Paul's oratory, the people of Lystra likened him to Mercury. Different speakers suit different audiences. Flood failed in the British parliament: Pitt would have failed in the Irish. Perhaps Paul found but once an audience fully prepared intellectually to hear him, at Athens, namely; and the impression on the inner consciousness, if not on their outer ear, was evidently profound. "Weak," his bodily presence might seem to those who expected in him a colossal reflection of his colossal purpose; but often, as he warmed and enlarged with his theme, his pale thin cheek might flush with unearthly fire, his eye dart out lightnings, his small figure appear at once distended and dignified, his tiny arm seem a horn of power, and his voice rise into keeping with the magnificence of the truths he uttered, and of the language in which he clothed them. Such transfigurations have been produced once and again by the sheer force of sympathy and earnestness (as in Wilberforce), where neither the inspiration of the Divinity nor the afflatus of the bard were present, and might surely be expected and witnessed in Paul, when all four were there.

To see him, as an orator, in a mood at once lofty and serene, let us stand beside him on Mars Hill, and contemplate the scene, the spectators, the speaker, and the speech. Magnificent, and fairy-seeming, as a dream is that unequaled landscape. In the distance, are the old snow-crowned mountains, where gods were said to dwell, and whose hoary heads seem to smile down contempt upon the new system, and its solitary defender. Closer at hand, stretches away a breathless ocean, doubling, by its glassy reflection, the look of eternity and of scorn which the mountains cast. Below, sleeps the "Eye of Greece," so broad

and bright, with all its towers and temples, and with the hum of its evening talk and evening worship, rising up the still air. Slowly sinking toward the west, Apollo is taking leave of his beloved city, while, perhaps, one ray from his setting orb strikes upon the bare brow of the daring Jew who is about to assail his empire. The scene altogether, how solemn! It is as if nature were interested, if not alarmed, and had become silent, to listen to some mysterious tidings. The spectators, who shall describe, after Raphael has painted them? Suffice it, that the *élite* of the vainest and the wisest people of the world, the most subtile of sophists, and the most eloquent of declaimers, are there; that Paul must bear the snowy sneer of the Epicurean, the statuesque derision of the Stoic, the rapt misty eye of the Academic, the blind and furious scowl of the superstitious rabble, the sharper and deeper malice lurking in the eye of the Jew, the anxious look of his own few but faithful friends, and the keen anatomic glance of the mere critic, collected as if into one massive, motley, shifting, yet still and sculptured face, which seems absolutely to circle him in, as it glares upon him. And before and within all this, there he stands, the tentmaker of Tarsus. Is he not ashamed or afraid to address the overwhelming audience? Shrinks he not from the task? Falters not his tongue? Gathers not his cheek crimson? Ashamed! Shall the archangel be ashamed when he comes forward, amid a silent universe, to blow the blast that shall call the dead to judgment, dissolve the elements of nature, and awaken the fires of his doom? No more does Paul's voice falter, or do his limbs shake. He rises to the majesty of the scene. He fills, easily and amply, the great sphere which he finds around him. He feels the dignity of his position. He knows he has a message from the God who made that ocean, these mountains, and these heavens. The men of Athens are clamoring for some "new thing"—he has the latest news from the throne of God. They are worshiping the "unknown God"—it is his task to unvail his image, and show him shining in the face of Christ Jesus Not (as Raphael represents him, in an attitude too impassioned

for the speech, *beneath* its calm greatness)—not with raised and outspread arms, but with still, strong, demonstrative finger uplifted, and eye meeting, Thermopylæ-like, all those multitudinous visages, with their crowd of varied expression, does he stand, and pour out that oration, surpassing the orations whereby Pericles and Demosthenes "shook the Arsenal"—sweet as the eloquence of Plato, and awful as the thunder of Jove—condensing in its nine immortal sentences, all the primal truths of nature and of Christianity: God, the One, the Unsearchable, the Creator, the Spirit, the Universal Ruler, Benefactor and Provider, the only Object of Worship, the Father of Man, and his Former of one Blood, the Merciful, the All-Present, the Hearer of Prayer, the Ordainer and Raiser from the Dead of Jesus, and the Judge of all the earth upon the Great Day; and at the close of which, first a silence, deeper than that which made them, "all ear," and then a murmur, loud, conflicting, and innumerous as that of ocean's waves, attest its power; while, lo! as some are mocking, and others saying, "We will hear thee again of this matter," the speaker seems to sink down, and melt away. The cloud has scattered its thunder-rain, and has to them disappeared forever.

This speech on Mars Hill is as calm as it is comprehensive. But, throughout his Epistles, there are scattered passages, in which his spirit is hurried along, as by a mighty rushing wind, into vehement and passionate rapture. Such enthusiasms never arise till his trains of thought are finished. And we are sometimes tempted to imagine that they have been longed for as impatiently by the writer, as they are often by the uninitiated reader. From the difficult, although needful, task of reconciling the Jewish with the Christian dispensation, or of explaining his own conduct to the babes and sucklings of the churches he had planted, Paul, even Paul the aged, the persecuted, the expected and expectant of Nero's sword, springs up exulting, into the broad and lofty fields of common Christian hope and joy. In this mood it is that he hushes the groanings of the creation, amid the resounding song, "Who shall separate us from the

love of Christ? we are in all things more than conquerors, through him that loved us;" that while underrating in comparison of love even angels' tongues, he praises it with more than an angel's eloquence; that he sets the doctrine of the resurrection to solemn music; that he shouts peans over the victories of faith; and that he paints now the cloud of witnesses, now the scene at Sinai, and again the fiery coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such passages affect you more from the deep disquisitions which precede, and the close and cogent practical lessons which follow them.

What strikes us principally about these disquisitions of Paul, and about his raptures—the two out of the three parts of which his Epistles consist—is a certain air of struggle and effort they both exhibit. His argument has sometimes the eagerness and the indistinctness of one pleaded in a dream. Language yields often below his strong steps. His eloquence labors to express conceptions which seem inexpressible. His feelings too, is only half uttered, and only half realized. The powers of Greek are tasked in such phrases as *Καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολήν*, but tasked in vain. Were it not that his mouth seemed shut, as by an oath, against all betrayal of the particulars of his visions, we might suppose him now and then uttering snatches of those mystic strains he had heard in Paradise, and was able on earth to remember, but not to understand or explain. These are his "sayings, hard to be understood," of which Peter speaks, and over which we see still many mortal, and many immortal, brows bending in eagerness; for even unto "*these things* do the angels desire to look."

Three subjects of wonder—for with Paul, as with all writers of the highest class, criticism soon fades into wonder—remain; one is the minute practical bearing of his conclusions. After having sounded depths, which may be the fear of cherubim, and soared to heights, where they stand, with faces vailed, and with heads whence the crowns have been cast away, he turns round, without any loss of dignity or feeling of degradation, to give careful counsels to the humblest of saints; to "salute

Tryphena and Tryphosa;" to remember a poor female slave; to inquire about the cloak and parchments he had left at Troas; and to immortalize in ignominy Alexander *a* coppersmith, hencoforth *the* coppersmith for evermore. The golden head of the great man often ends in feet of miry clay, at once clumsy and foul; but Paul's subtile power is equally diffused down his whole nature—majestic on all great, he is mindful of all little things. The second marvel is the small compass in which his Epistles lie. The longest of them are short. There is not a day but letters, longer than those to the Romans or the Hebrews, are passing from country to country, and city to city His letter to Philemon is a mere card. And yet, round these little notes, piles of commentaries have darkened; from them, as from a point of separation, entire sects have diverged; over them, alas! blood has been spilled; and in them, lie mysteries, the very edge of which has hardly yet transpired. Of what series of letters out of Scripture, but these, can the half of this be said? And the power thus lodged in them, what can we call it, if we call it not divine? No charlatan, no fanatic, no pedant, no mere genius, could, by such brief touches, have so roused the "majestic world."

For mark, these letters, while making no *pretensions* to literary merit, while recording no new miracles, do announce themselves as from the Lord, and do testify to the supernatural character of Jesus Christ, did therefore commit their credit, and that of their author, to the entire claims of Christianity, and expose themselves to severe tests, and to the keenest scrutiny. And it is because they came forth from this triumphantly, and made the prejudiced confess their truth, and feel their power, that they now live and shine, as though written in stars upon the page of the heavens.

Our third wonder is their variety of subject, and tone, and merit. The *idea* of Paul, indeed, throughout all his writings, is the same. It is that of the largeness of Christianity, as compared with the law of Moses, and its unity and holiness, when contrasted with heathenism. It may be expressed in one of the

sentences uttered by him from Mars Hill :—"God (the one spirit) has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, and now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." His difficulties, in enforcing this great compound idea, arise from his doctrine of a special divine love, and from the prejudices of Judaizing believers ; and to meet those difficulties, all the energies of his intellect are bent. He seeks to bring the tabernacle, on the one hand, with its worshipers, but without its temporary rites, and the heathen worshipers, on the other, without their idols, under the reconciling rainbow of the covenant. But, while ever pursuing this master-thought, he seeks it through a great variety of paths. And hence monotony, always a literary sin of magnitude, attaches not at all to his Epistles. Not one is a duplicate of another. His principal object in the Romans is to level Jew and Gentile in one dust, that he may first surprise them into one salvation, and then, by the strong force of gratitude, "conclude," or shut them all up into one holy obedience. In the Hebrews, it is to show the unity in diversity, and the diversity in unity, of the two systems of Judaism and Christianity, which he does by a comparison, so subtile, yet so clear and candid, that even prejudice, ere the close, is prepared to exult with him in this triumphant preference of the hill Sion, to the faded fires and deadened thunders of the "Mount that might be touched." In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he plunges into the thick of Christian duty, into questions of casuistry, into minute practical details, gathering them all along with him as he rushes on to the grand climax of the Resurrection, with its prospective and retrospective bearings upon personal holiness, till his call to Corinthian backsliders seems to thunder through the last trump. And so with his other letters. In some of them, his chief purpose is to proclaim the glory of Christ. In others, it is to announce his Second Advent. In others, it is to magnify his own office, and to stir up the declining liberality of his correspondents. In others, it is to teach, warn, exhort, and encourage some of his leading children in the faith. And in one, the shortest and sweetest of all, written in

a prison, but redolent of the virgin air of liberty, he condescends to baptize what had been a bond of harsh necessity and fear between two men, Philemon and Onesimus, into a bond of Christian brotherhood and love.

The style, too, and tone are different. Paul's "token," to be sure, "is in every Epistle." His presence proclaims itself by divers infallible marks: a kindly and earnest introduction, fervor of spirit, a close train of argument, winding on to end in a tail of fire, a digressive movement, short bursts of eloquence, sudden swells of devotion, audible yearnings of affection, strong and melting advices, minute remembrances, and a rich and effectual blessing at the close. But to some of his Epistles, the description and denunciation of sin give a dark, oppressive grandeur. Witness the 1st chapter of the Romans, which reminds us of God looking down upon the children of men, "to see if any did understand or know God," and beckoning on the deluge, as he says, "They are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Others sparkle with the light of immortality, and might have been penned by the finger of Paul's "Resurrection-body." Others glow with a deep, mild, autumnal luster, as if reflected from the face of him he had seen as one born out of due time; they are full of Christ's love. Some, like the book of Hebrews, rise into rich rhetoric, from intricate and laborious argument, and contain little that is personally characteristic. Others are simple as beatings of his heart. On one or two, the glory of the Second Advent lies so brightly, that the gulf of death is buried in the radiance; in others, his own approaching departure, with its circumstances of suffering and of triumph, fills the field of view; and he says, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

Such are the letters of Paul—letters which, like the works large or small, of all the great, seem to descend from, instead of overtopping, the writer. And we try to complete the image of the man, by piecing together those broken fragments of his soul—broken, though all seeking and tending to unity. His

life, after all, was the Poem; he himself is "our Epistle." A wondrous life it was. Whether we view him, with low bent head and eager eye, at the feet of Gamaliel; or sitting near Stephen's stoning, disdaining to wet his hands, but wetting his soul in his blood; or, under a more entire possession of his fanaticism, haling men and women to prison; or, far before his comrades on the way to Damascus, panting like a hound when his scent of game is getting intolerable; or lifting up one last furious glance through his darkening eyes to the bright form and face of Jesus; or led by the hand, the corpse of his former self, into the city, which had been waiting in panic for his coming; or "rolling his eyes in vain to find the day," as Ananias enters; or let down from the wall in a basket—the Christianity of the Western world suspended on the trembling rope; or bashful and timid, when introduced to Cephas and the other pillars of the Church, who, in their turn, shrink at first from the Tiger of Tarsus, tamed though he be; or rending his garments at Lystra, when they are preparing him divine honors; or, with firm yet sorrowful look, parting with Barnabas at Antioch; or in the prison, and after the earthquake, silent, unchained, still as marble, while the jailer leaps in trembling, to say, "What must I do to be saved?" or turning, with dignified resentment, from the impenitent Jews to the Gentiles; or preaching in the upper chamber, Eutychus alive, through sleep and death; or weeping at the ship's side at Miletus; or standing on the stairs at Jerusalem, and beckoning to an angry multitude; or repelling the charge of madness before Festus, more by his looks and his folded arms, than by his words; or calm, as the figure at the ship's head, amid the terrors of the storm; or shaking off the viper from his hand as if with the

"Silent magnanimity of Nature and her God;"

or, in Rome, cherishing the chain like a garment; or, with shackled arm, writing those words of God, "never to be bound;" or confronting Nero, as Daniel did his lions in the

den, and subduing him under the mere stress of soul; or, at last, yielding his head to the axe, and passing away to receive the "Crown of Life" the Lord was to confer upon him; wherever, and in whatever circumstances, Paul appears, his nature, like a sun, displays itself entire, in its intensity, its earnestness, its clear honesty, its incessant activity, its struggle to include the world in its grasp—but is shaded, as evening draws on, into milder hues, tenderer traits, and a holier effulgence. And though the light went down in darkness and blood, its relict radiance still shines upon us like the Parthenon, which seemed "carved out of an Athenian sunset." Who that witnessed the persecutor on his way to Damascus, could have predicted that a noon of such torrid flame could so tenderly and divinely die; and that the name of Paul, when uttered now, should come to the Christian ear, as if carried on the breath of that "south wind which blew softly" while he and the Everlasting Gospel were sailing together past the Cretan shore to Rome?

CHAPTER XV.

PETER AND JAMES.

The poetry of Peter lies more in his character than in his writings, although both display its unequivocal presence. His impetuosity, his forwardness, his outspoken utterance, his mistakes and blunders, his want of tact, his familiarity with his master, his warm-heartedness, his simplicity of character, render him the Oliver Goldsmith of the New Testament. It was owing to the child-like temperament of genius, blended with peculiar warmth of heart, that he on one occasion took Jesus aside, and began to rebuke him—that he said, on another, "thou shalt never wash my feet;" but added immediately, on being told what it imported, "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head" —that he muttered on the Mount of the Transfiguration, the supremely absurd words, spoken as if through a dream, "Let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias"—that he drew his sword, and cut off the ear of Malchus—that he adventured on the water where Christ was walking—that he was the spokesman of the twelve, always ready, whether with sense or with kindly nonsense—and that his affectionate nature was grieved when Christ asked at him the third time, "Lovest thou me?" With this temperament consort his faults; his boldness breaks down when danger appears, as has often happened with men of the poetical temperament; even in his denial of Christ, we see the fervor of the man —it is with *oaths and curses*, for his very sin has an emphasis with it. And in fine keeping, too, with this, are the tears produced by Christ's look (Christ knew that for Peter a look was

enough)—fast, fiery, bitter, and renewed, it is said, whenever he heard the cock crow, till his dying day.

The change produced on Peter after the resurrection is very singular. We can scarce at first recognize the blunderer on Transfiguration Hill, the sleeper in Gethsemane, the gravely-stupid and unconsciously impudent rebuker of Jesus, the open-mouthed, grown-up child, in the solemn president of Pentecost, the bold declaimer at the "gate called Beautiful," the dignified captive sisted before the rulers and the high-priests, the minister of divine justice standing with the javelin of death over Ananias and Sapphira, the thaumaturgist, whose long evening shadow swept and cured sick streets, and before whom an angel opened the prison-doors, or the first embassador to the Gentile world. But such a change has often been exemplified in persons of remarkable character, under the pressure of peculiar circumstances, or through the force of great excitement. The story of the first Brutus, although probably a mythic fable, contains in it a wide truth, inclosing a hundred facts within it. "Call no man happy, till he is dead." Call no man stupid, till he be dead. Give the god within the man fair play, feed him with food convenient for him, and he may in due time produce a divine progeny. The Atlantean burden will often awaken the Atlantean strength to bear it. In Peter—the forward, the rash, but the loving, the sincere, and the simple-minded—there slumbered a wisdom and sagacity, a fervor and an eloquence, which the first touch of the fiery tongue of Pentecost aroused into an undying flame, to become a light, a glory, and a defense around the infant Church. "Desertion," which Foster has recorded as one grand ally to "decision of character," did its wonted work on him. Left by Christ foremost in the gap, a portion of Christ's spirit was bestowed on him, and his native faculty—great but uncultured —was effectually stirred up. Remorse, too, had wrung his heart; tears had been his burning baptism—and let those who have experienced tell how high the soul sometimes springs to the sting of woe. The new birth of intellect, like the natural birth of man, and the new birth of God's Spirit, is fre-

quently through pangs, as dear on reflection as they are dreadful in endurance. Nor had Peter not profited by his intercourse with Christ, during his stay on earth after the resurrection—the most interesting portion of which recorded, is indeed a pathetic interview between the forgiven denier and his appeased and loving Lord.

A more wonderful contrast than this, between Peter before and Peter after the resurrection, would be presented, did we accept the monstrous pre-eminence given to him by the Roman Catholic Church. We refer our readers, for a confutation of this error, to Isaac Barrow's unanswered and unanswerable treatise. But, besides, we confess that we can not, without ludicrous emotions, think of poor, talking, imprudent, noble-hearted Peter of Galilee, as the predecessor of the many proud, ambitious, scheming, mendacious, lewd, and thoroughly worldly and selfish Popes; and are disposed to laugh still more loudly, when we find his escapades, his rash, unthinking words, his want of reticence and common sense, paraded by Papists (because in all these things he was first), as evidences that even then he had laid the foundation for his universal sway. Besides, did his one denial form a precedent for the infinite series of falsehoods that Church has since palmed on the world? Did his one stream of curses create that deep river of blasphemy, which has run down collaterally with the progress of the Roman Catholic faith? And how could the intrepid fisherman, with his "coat off"—the humble married man—recognize his successors in the pampered and purple-clad prelates—many of whom would have been ready to fling the price of all purgatory into their courtezan's lap.

Great, unquestionably, as the change was upon Peter, after he had fallen and Christ had departed, much of his former character remained. His language before his judges breathes not a little of the unceremonious fisherman, although his attitude has become more dignified, and his eye be shining with a pentecostal fire. In his impetuous mission to the Gentiles, and in his sensitive and shrinking conduct when reproached for it—in

all that line of action, for which Paul rebuked him to the face—we see the old man of warmth and weakness, ardent in temperament and narrow in views, rapid in advance and hasty in retreat. But that any jealousy for Paul ever entered Peter's mind, we can not believe, or, if it did, it must have been the transient feeling of a child, who this moment weeps because her sister has received a prettier plaything than she, and is the next fondling her in her arms, and the next asleep in her bosom.

Another change still was before Peter. His nature must at once soften and sublimate into its final shape—the shape in which his letters reveal and leave him. And that is a form as lovely as it is majestic. The weakness of his youth is all gone, but its warmth remains. The Jewish prejudice, which survived his early days, and seemed somehow to befit the "apostle of the circumcision," has been exchanged for a catholic charity. On his brow, now overhung by silver hair, there meet the glories of the "holy mount," and those of the day of his departure, when he shall again see and embrace his Lord. A tearful sublimity, as of a sun setting amid rainy clouds; a yearning affection; a fullness of evangelical statement; an earnestness of practical admonition; a perpetual and lingering reference to Christ; a soft shade of sadness, at the prospect of the speedy disappearance of all earthly things, brightly relieved, however, by glimpses of his Lord's appearance—these, with some shadowy hints as to the intermediate state, and one picture of the Sodom-like sins of his day, form the constituent features of the two Epistles addressed by Peter to the "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, and to those who have obtained like precious faith with us." Their style, like their spirit, is mild and sweet. Gravity, dignity, and grace—how unlike his hurried words of yore!—distinguish every line. Perhaps only in one passage do we see the old fire of the fisherman, unsoftened and unsubdued by trial, experience, or time. We speak of the tremendous invective, contained in the second chapter of the Second Epistle, against the false teachers of the time—one of four or

five "burning coals of juniper," which, as if carried from the conflagrations of the old prophets, are thrown down here and there amid the more placid pages of the New Testament. Such are Christ's denunciation of the Pharisees, Paul's account of the heathen world; and beside, and almost identical with, Peter's invective, is the Epistle of Jude. *That*, indeed, is but one red ray from the "wrath of the Lamb." But in Jude, as well as in Peter, poetry blends with, strangely beautifies, and clearly discovers the solemn purpose and terror of the prophetic strain. Behold the dreary cluster of metaphors, like a grove of various trees, all withered into the unity of death, of which Peter begins, and Jude closes, the collection. "These," says Peter, "are wells without water—clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever." "Clouds," says the yet sterner Jude, "they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, *twice dead*, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, *foaming out their own shame;* wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." If this is imitation, it is the imitation of one animated by a kindred spirit, and possessing a still stronger and darker fancy.

We have already defended such denunciations of sin, which are proper to both Testaments, although more frequently found in the Old, because they express, not private, but public resentment. While hearing them, we should say, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man." Indeed, their divinity is proved by their grandeur and daring. They are as beautiful as terrible. They are "winged with red lightning and impetuous rage." Passion there is in them, but it is sublimed, transfigured, purified; approaching, in its power and justice, to that wrath on which the sun never goes down, and expressing, not the malignity of earth, but the "malison of Heaven." Had we seen Paul, Peter, or Jude, inscribing those words of doom, or had we witnessed Christ's face darkening into the divinest sorrow, or heard his voice trembling in grief, as well as anger, we should have felt in a higher degree, the emotion of the skeptic who had been

reproaching Christ for his angry language to the Pharisees, but who, when Channing took up the book, and read it aloud, said —"Oh! if that, indeed, were the tone in which he spoke!" If *that* were the tone! Could not Jesus have eloquized his own words better than the good and noble-minded American? Must not the Ithuriel rebuke have been pointed by the Ithuriel tones as well as by the Ithuriel countenance?

> "So spake the cherub, and his grave rebuke,
> Severe in youthful beauty, added grace
> Invincible."

Safer, after all, to reproach than to encounter such fires of righteous resistless anger, "running along the ground." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."

Peter's distinction, both as a writer and man, is not so much fancy or intellect, as it is feeling. Running riot in his early history, fluctuating in his middle life, it is in his Epistles a calm and steady flame, burning heavenward. Rejecting, as probably a fiction, the story that he desired to be crucified with head downward, lest he should have too much honor in assuming the attitude of his denied and dying Lord, we may see in it a mythic emblem of his ultimate lowliness of spirit, as well as of the inversion of character which he underwent. It may represent, too, those sacrifices within sacrifices so common in that martyr age, in which men sought for fearful varieties of death—gloried in provoking their adversaries to invent new torments—made, at the least, no compromise with the last enemy, nor wished one of his beams of terror shorn—so certain were they on the one hand, that their sufferings could never approach the measure of their master's, and, on the other, that the reward was near, and unspeakably transcendent. Crucified with inverted head, or impaled on iron stakes, or breast-deep in flames, it mattered not, since Paradise smiled, and Jesus beckoned, almost visibly beside them. Let us pardon even the madness of that primitive rage for martyrdom, when we think of

the primitive patience of hope and security of faith from which it sprung.

It is impossible to contemplate Peter's works out of the checkered light of his character. It is different with James, whose character is only to be read in his Epistle, for all traditionary notices of his history and habits seem uncertain. We know little of him, except that he was not the James who stood with Jesus on the Mount; that he was known as James the Less; and that many identify him with James, the Lord's brother, of whom Paul speaks. At the Council of Jerusalem, he acted, in some measure, as moderator; and his letter, as well as his speech, shows him to have possessed qualities admirably adapting him for this office—wisdom, calmness, common sense, avoidance of extremes, a balanced intellect, and a determined will.

The Epistle of James is the first and best homily extant. It is not what many would now call a "Gospel sermon" (but neither is the Sermon on the Mount). It has little doctrinal statement, and no consecutive argument; it is a list of moral duties, inspirited by the earnestness with which they are urged, and beautified by the graphic and striking imagery in which the style is clothed. James is one of the most sententious, pointed, and terse of the New Testament authors. He reads like a modern. The edges of his sentences sparkle. His words are as "goads, and as nails." He reminds us more of Ecclesiastes, than of any other Scripture book. Paul's short sentences never occur till the close of his Epistles, and remind us then of hurried pantings of the heart. They are like the postscripts of lovers. James's entire epistle is composed of brief glancing sentences, discovering the extreme liveliness and piercing directness of his intellect. Every word tells. How sharp and effective are such expressions as—"When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one

God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble. Is any among you afflicted?—Let him pray. Is any merry?—Let him sing psalms."

In one of those sentences ("the devils believe, and tremble"), as well as in his quaint and powerful picture of the tongue, we find that very rare and somewhat fearful gift of irony winding and darkening into invective. What cool scorn and warm horror meet in the words, "*believe*, and *tremble!*" How formidable does the "little member" he describes become, when it is tipped with the "fire of hell!" And in what slow successive thunderous words does he describe the "wisdom which is not from above," as "earthly, sensual, devilish!" And upon the selfish rich he pours out a very torrent of burning gold, as if from the Lord of Sabaoth himself, into whose ears the cries of the reapers have entered.

In fine, although we pronounce James rather an orator than a poet, yet there do occur some touches of genuine poetic beauty, of which, in pursuing his swift rhetorical way, he is himself hardly conscious. "Let the rich," he says, "rejoice in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away." For a moment, he follows its brief history: "The sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways"—"fade away," and yet "rejoice," inasmuch as, like the flower, whose bloom, savor, and pith have floated up to swell the broad-blown lily of day, his adversity withers in the prosperity of God. "What, again, is life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Such flowers, indeed, are transplanted from the prophetic forests There, under the proud cedars, they were overshadowed, and almost lost; here, they bloom alone, and are the more lovely, that they seem to grow amid the fragments of the tables, which Moses, in his ire, strewed along the sides of Sinai—divine rubbish, left, as has not unfrequently been, in other senses, the case, by human wrath, but potent in its very powder

A little common sense often goes a great way in a mystified and hollow world. How much mist does one sunbeam disperse! James's few sentences—the law in powder—thrown out with decision, pointed by keen satire, and touched with terrific anger, have prevailed to destroy and disperse a thousand Antinomian delusions, and to redeem the perfect "law of liberty" from manifold charges of licentiousness. Even grant we, that, among the unhallowed multitude who have sought to reduce the standard of morals, Luther, like another Aaron, may have mingled, even he must down before the "Man with a word and a blow," the man Moses, impersonated by James, crying out—as his face's indignant crimson flashes through the glory which the Divine presence had left upon it, and his eye outbeams his face and outruns his hurrying feet, and his arms make a heave-offering of the fire-written tables—"Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

Earnestness is a quality as old as the heart of man. Nor is the proclamation of it, as an essential and all-important element, merely of yesterday. It was preached—nay, cursed—into Israel's ears by Deborah, when she spake so bitterly of poor, trimming, tarrying, neutral Meroz, "which came not forth to the help of the Lord." It was asked, in thunder, from Carmel, by Elijah, as he said—"How long halt ye between two opinions?" It was proclaimed, through a calm louder than the thunder, by the Great Teacher himself, as he told the docile, well-behaved, money-loving weakling, in the Gospel, and in him, millions—"Go, sell all that thou hast, and take up thy cross, and follow me." And here, when faith in the Cross itself was retiring to rest in the upper rooms of speculative acquiescence, or traditionary acceptance, comes James, stoutly, resisting the retreat. His great demand is "life, action, fruit." Roughly, as one awakens those who are sleeping amid flames, does he shake the slumberers, and alarm the supine. But let those who have been taught by more modern prophets the value of earnestness remember, that James always admits the authority of that faith whence he would expect virtue to spring.

"Faith is dead, being alone;" in other words, it is not the Christian faith at all. *That* is necessarily a living, fruit-bearing principle. And, strong as his hand is to tear away the subterfuges of the hypocrite, and bold as his spirit is to denounce every shade of inconsistency—every "sham" of that day, and although his tone against oppression and oppressors crashes up into that of the old prophets, and his fourth and fifth chapters be in the very mood of Malachi—yet the whole tenor of his doctrine, and spirit, and language, substantiates his first and only title—"James, a servant of God and *of the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

CHAPTER XVI

JOHN.

THERE is, or was till lately, extant a vulgar Bibliolatry, which would hardly admit of any preference being given to one Scripture writer over another, or of any comparison being instituted between its various authors. This was absurd, even on the ground which the doctrine of mechanical inspiration took. Suppose that the whole Bible came from God, in the same way in which nature is derived from him; yet, who ever was afraid of preferring the Alps to the Apennines, or of comparing the Pacific with the Atlantic deep? So comparisons were inevitable between writers of such various styles as Isaiah and the author of Ruth, the Psalms and the Historical Books; and preferences to all but the mere slaves of a system, were as inevitable as comparisons.

Now, we need not be afraid to avow, that we have our favorites among Scripture writers, and that a leading favorite is John. There was "one disciple whom Jesus loved;" and we plead guilty to loving the *writer* supremely too. It has been supposed by some, that there was a certain resemblance between the countenance of John, and that of Jesus. We figure the same sweetness in the smile, the same silence of ineffable repose upon the brow, the same mild luster in the eye. And, as long as John lived, he would renew to those who had known the Savior the impressions made by his transcendent beauty, for transcendently beautiful he surely was. But the resemblance extends to the features of his composition, as well as of his face. It seems Jesus who is still speaking to us. The

babe-like simplicity, the artlessness, the lisping out of the loftiest thoughts, the sweet undertone of utterance, the warm female-like tenderness and love, along with a certain divine dogmatism, of the Great Teacher, are all found in an inferior measure in the writings of his apostle. He has, too, a portion of that strange familiarity with divine depths which distinguished his master, who speaks of them always as if he were lying in his Father's bosom. So John seems perfectly at home in heaven, and the stupendous subjects and scenery thereof. He is not like Paul, "caught up to Paradise," but walks like a native through its blessed clime. His face is flushed with the ardors of the eternal noon, and his style wears the glow of that celestial sunshine. He dips his pen in love—the pure and fervid love of heaven. Love-letters are his Epistles—the mere artless spillings of the heart—such letters as Christ might have written to the family at Bethany. Jesus is the great theme of John. His name perpetually occurs; nay, he thinks so often of him, that he sometimes speaks of, without naming, him. Thus, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." "Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." In his Epistles, occurs the sentence of sentences, "God is love." Why is not this sentence sown in our gardens in living green; framed and hung on the walls of our nurseries; taught as the first sounds to little ones? Why not call God Love? Why not change the name of our Deity? Why not instruct children to answer, when asked who made you? Love, the Father. Who redeems you? Love, the Son. Who sanctifies you? Love, the Holy Ghost? Surely, on some day of balm did this golden word pass across the mind of the apostle, when, perhaps, pondering on the character, and recalling the face of Jesus, looking up to the glowing sky and landscape of the East, and feeling his own heart burning within him, he spread out the spark in his bosom, till it became a flame, encompassing the universe, and the great generalization leapt from his lips—"God is love."

Complete as an epic, and immortal as complete, stands this poem-sentence, insulated in its own mild glory, and the cross of Jesus is below.

Imagination, properly speaking, is not found in the Epistles of John. They are full of heart, of practical suggestion, of intuitive insight, and of grave, yet tender dignity. You see the aged and venerable saint seated among his spiritual children, and pouring out his rich simplicities of thought and feeling, while a tear now and then steals down his cheek. That passion for Christ, which was in John as well as in Paul, appears in the form of tranquil expectation. We shall soon "see him *as he is*." The orator is seen as he is, when he has shot his soul into his entire audience, and is ruling them like himself. The warrior appears as he is, when lifting up his far-seen finger of command, and leading on the charge. The poet is seen as he is, when the fine frenzy of inspiration is in his eye. So Jesus shall be seen as he is, when he comes garlanded and girt for the judgment; and when, blessed thought, his people shall be *like* him, for the first look of that wondrous face of his shall complete and eternize the begun similitude, and the angelic hosts, perceiving the resemblance, seeing millions upon millions of reflected Christs, shall take up the cry, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation may enter in."

In his Gospel, John takes a loftier and more daring flight. He leaps at once into the Empyrean, and walks with calm, majestic mastery beside its most awful gulfs. How abruptly it begins! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This emulates, evidently, the first sentence of Genesis, and ranks with it, and the first word, "God," in the Hebrews, as one of the three grandest introductions in literature. Our minds are carried back to the silent and primeval abyss. Over it there is heard suddenly a sound, which swells on and on, till to its tune that abyss conceives, labors, agonizes, and brings forth the universe, and the harmony dies away in the words--"It is very good." Or, hear a true poet—

"A power and a glory of silence lay,
O'erbrooding the lonely primeval day,
Ere yet unwoven the vail of light,
Through which shineth forth the eternal might;
When the Word on the infinite void went forth,
And stirred it with pangs of a godlike birth;
And forth sprung the twain, in which doth lie,
Enfolded all being of earth and sky.
* * * * * *
Then rested the Word, for its work was done."

To follow the history of the "Omnific Word"—the Logos, and darling thought of Plato—till he traced him entering into a lowly stable in Bethlehem, and wedding a village virgin's son, is John's difficult but divine task. Great, indeed, is the mystery of godliness, but not too great to be believed. The center of this creation is now supposed by many to lie, not in one orb vaster than his fellows, but in some obscure point. Thus, the God of it was found in fashion as a man, in the carpenter's son—the flower of man, and fellow of Jehovah—but with his glory disguised behind a robe of flesh, and with a cross for his death-place. Who has not at times been impressed with an intuitive feeling, as he walked along with a friend, of the exact magnitude of his mind, and of his true character, which came rushing upon him, and could not be gainsayed or disbelieved? John, too, as he lay on the bosom of the Savior, and listened to his teaching, seems to have felt the burning impression, that through those eyes looked Omniscience, and that below that bosom was beating the very love of God, and said, "This is the true God, and Eternal Life." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." No mere logical deduction could have led him to such a conclusion, apart from his profound intuitive persuasion; and that once formed, no catena of ten thousand links could have dragged him back from it. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it, but my Father which is in heaven."

Full to Christ, in his highest estate, from the very beginning

of his Gospel, does this Evangelist point. The others commence with recounting his earthly ancestry, or the particulars of his birth. John shows him at once as the "Lord, high and lifted up," descending from this eminence to wed his own body, and to save his people's souls. 'Tis the only complete history of Christ. It traces his connection with the Father, not through the blood of patriarchs and kings, but though the heavens, up directly to Jehovah's bosom. How grand this genealogy —"No man hath seen God, at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him!" And after announcing his true descent, he sets himself through the rest of the book, as if acting under the spell of a lover's fascination, to record every word which he could catch from those heavenly lips, as well as to narrate some of the tenderer and more private incidents in the life of the "Man of Sorrows."

To Samaria's well, and to the last sayings of Christ, we have alluded in a former chapter. But we can not refrain from referring to one or two scenes, exclusively related by John, of an intensely poetical character: one is, the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus by night. Meetings of interesting and representative men, especially when unexpected and amid extraordinary circumstances, become critical points in the history of mankind. Such was the meeting of Wallace and Bruce: the one representing Scotland's wild patriotic valor—the other, its calmer, more collected, and regal-seeming power. Such was that of old Galileo and young Milton in the dungeon—surely a theme for the noblest pencil—the meeting of Italy's old *savant*, and England's young scholar—the gray-haired sage, each wrinkle on his forehead the furrow of a star; and the "Lady of his College," with Comus curling in his fair locks, and the dream of Eden sleeping on his smooth brow; while the dim twilight of the cell, spotted by the fierce eyes of the officials, seemed the age too late, or too early, on which both had fallen—a meeting like that of Morning, with her one star, and coming day, and of Midnight, with all her melancholy maturity, and hosts of

diminished suns—a meeting like that of two centuries. And so met, at the dark and silent hour, in the gardens of the Tuileries, Mirabeau and Marie Antoinette—the "wild submitted Titan," kissing her hand as they parted, and saying, "Madame, the monarchy is saved," while, hark! the echoes seem to catch the words, and to return them in scorn.

It is with apology that we refer, upon the same page with this, to the meeting recorded in John. Yet its interest is historical as well as religious. Nicodemus represented the inquiring and dissatisfied mind of Jewry—"*Young* Jerusalem"—sick of forms and quibbles, and yet unable to comprehend as yet a spiritual faith; tired of the present, but not ripe for the future; in love with Christ's miracles, but fearing his cross, and not despising its shame. And hence, when the evening fell down, with a step soft and silent as its shadows, he steals forth to meet with, and talk to, Jesus. Jesus, seeing in him the representative of a class—a class possessing many excellent qualities—who are sincere, whose belief in formalities and old saws and shams is shaken, who are anxious inquirers, but who united to these, weakness of will, timidity of disposition, and a lack of profound spirituality, and self-sacrifice—tells him in effect, "Dream not that you can get to heaven in this tiptoe fashion, that you can always walk with the night, in seeking the day; you must go all my length, you must walk with me as well as to me; you must make a public and prominent stand for my cause; and that you may be able to do this, you must undergo a thorough and vital change; you must become a little child; you must be born again; you must sink down into the cradle ere you can hope to begin your ascent toward the throne."

How this strange yet noble paradox of our religion—the most staggering of all spiritual truths—must have sounded in the ear of Nicodemus, at the dead hour of night, when all else was sleeping, save the stars! Ah! ye bright watchers, and holy ones, ye have many voices, many words and languages are yours, but ye can not utter such a truth as this—"Ye must be

born again!" Tremble on, then, and remain silent, and allow him to speak who can!

There are modern Nicodemuses, who hold stolen interviews with Christ, and cast stolen glances at Christianity, and yet will not walk right onward with him, nor fully embrace his faith. These are of various classes; but we may here specify two. There are those, first, who, like Nicodemus, believe the Savior's miracles, but do not feel the deep radical spirituality of his religion. Such men do desperate battle for the external evidence, but are strangers to the living power. To them the words, "Ye must be born again," sound meaningless, empty, and strange. Others, again, a class numerous at present, are not in sympathy with the miraculous part of Christianity, scarcely believe in it, have, nevertheless, a liking for its spiritual and loftier aspects, but lothe the humility and childlike submission which it requires of its votaries. They would see—what would they not see? if they would stoop; but stoop they will not. Its spirit, in other words, is not theirs; and, therefore, they behold Christ only at and through the night. If they were but, like Nicodemus, to wait and hear the words of Jesus, till the day should break and all the shadows should flee away! For he had, after all, a noble destiny. He followed Christ afar off; but he followed him to the last. He was true to his dust. He, with Joseph of Arimathea, took him down from the Cross; and both seem now chiseled supporters to his drooping head, and chiseled mourners over his lonely grave. Not men to support his living cause; they were marble to bend over, adorn, and defend his dead body.

The scene between Jesus, the blind man, and the Jews, related in the 9th chapter, is not only remarkable, as Paley notices, for its air of truth, but for its dramatic interest. The play of character with character—the manner in which the peculiarities of each are supported—the retorts of the blind man, so keen-witted and caustic—the undulations of the little story—and the close in the conversion of the poor man, all prove it a leaf from the book of life, but plucked and arranged by the

hand of a master and an eye-witness. Equally natural, and tenderer far, is the history of Lazarus and his sisters. We say not, with an eminent living divine, that Jesus loved Mary with the pure and peculiar affection which the word generally implies; but certainly his heart regarded the circle of Bethany, of which she was one, with especial interest. Lazarus seems to have been an innocent—not in weakness, perhaps, but in gentleness; one of those living pauses in the music of man whom it is pleasant and rare to encounter. In that house, the Savior felt himself, more than anywhere else, at rest; it was an arbor on his hill Difficulty, where he loved well to be, and where the three indwellers seemed to perform various parts in suiting and soothing his wide nature—Martha ministering to his necessities, Mary sitting at his feet, and Lazarus forming his mild and shorn shadow. The ministering spirit, the listening disciple, and the quiet reflector of his glory, were all there.

Into this loving circle, the entrance of Jesus did not prevent that of death. And who needs to be reminded of the melting circumstances of that death—of the slow approach of the Savior—of the meeting with Martha—of Mary casting herself down in her tears before him, tears which seem to accuse his delay as the cause of her brother's death—of Christ's own troubled spirit and weeping eyes—or of the brief, but victorious duel with death, at the mouth of the cave, at the close of which the dead-alive came forth, and the yawn of the grave behind seemed that of the disappointment of the last enemy himself, and the light of returning life in Lazarus's eye, the first spark of the general resurrection? "Jesus wept." It is the shortest sentence in the Bible. But sooner than have wanted that little sentence, should we have consented that all books but the Bible should have perished—that the entire glories of an earthly literature had sunk into the grave of forgetfulness. For the tears of the Divine Man are links binding us immediately to the throne of God, and the rainbow which is around it.

John, indeed, seems to have set himself to preserve all the tearful passages which trickle down upon the history of Jesus

He was a gatherer of tears; and to him we owe such rich gleanings as the scene between himself, Jesus, and Mary, his mother, at the cross—the interview between Christ and Mary Magdalene, when the one word "Mary," uttered in his old tones, opened the way to her heart, and made her feel that her Lord was the same to-day as he had been yesterday—and the cross-questioning of Simon, son of Jonas, carried on till he was grieved, and cried, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

Thus is the Gospel of John—the Odyssey of Christ's marvelous story—calmer, softer, and higher than the other three. The first three leave Christ with the halo of heaven around his head; while this deepens, perhaps, the grandeur of the Ascension, by dropping the vail over it. And in what a noble gasconade does the warm-hearted apostle close his narrative! "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." A gasconade this, indeed, of a very pardonable sort, if it refer only to the literal deeds which our short-lived Savior performed, or to the literal words of a three years' ministry. But it becomes literally true, if we look to the spiritual import and manifold influences of that life and that gospel. These have overflowed earth, and spilled their golden drops throughout the universe. That "story of a life" has passed already into almost every language, and into innumerable millions of hearts. Already men, amid trackless wildernesses, in every region of the world, are blessing their bread and their water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, or looking up in silent worship, as they see the cross of the south at midnight, bending in the glimmering desert of the tropical air. Nay, as astronomers tell us, that there is an era at hand when that splendid Constellation shall be seen in our hemisphere, as well as in the south, and shall peacefully shine down the glories of Arcturus and Orion; so there is a day coming when all nations shall call Christ blessed, and the whole earth be filled with his glory. It can

be done, for it is in God's power; it shall be done, for it is in his prophecy.

That this tender-hearted and babe-like apostle should have become the seer of the dreadful splendors of the Apocalypse—that its crown of fire should be seen sitting on the head of the author of the Epistle to the Elect Lady, may seem strange, and has, along with other difficulties, induced many to deny to John the authorship of this mystic volume. For a resolution of the external difficulties, we refer our readers to the critical works which abound. The intellectual difficulty does not seem to us very formidable. The Apocalypse differs not more widely from the epistles, than Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," from his "Fears in Solitude;" or, than Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound," from his "Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples." Often authors seem to rise or to sink into spheres quite alien, and afar from the common dwelling-place of their genius. Their style and language alter. They are caught above themselves, like "the swift Ezekiel, by his lock of hair;" or they slip momentarily down into abysses of strange bathos. So with John. In a desert island, with his mind thrown out, by this very solitude, into the obscure prospects of the future —with the "visions of God" bowing their burden upon his soul—what wonder that his language should change, his figures mix, and his spirit even and genius undergo transfiguration?

Nay, we fancy a peculiar beauty in this selection of John. Who has not seen a child astray in a populous city, shielded by her very weakness, safe, as if seated by her mother's knee? Beautiful and melting, to grandeur, this spectacle; but finer still that of John, lost and safe in his simplicity and innocence, amid the bursting vials, slow-opening seals, careering chariots, conflicting multitudes, and cataracts of fire and blood, which fill this transcendent vision! The helplessness of the seer adds to the greatness of the spectacle; and we feel this is no elaborate work of a visionary artist—it is the mere transcript of a sight which came upon his soul; and no lamb ever looked with more innocent, fearless unconsciousness, upon an eclipse passing

over his glen, than does John regard the strange terrors and tumultuating glories of the Apocalypse. Once, indeed, he "falls down as dead;" but his general attitude is that of quiet, though rapt reception.

It is, indeed, a tumultuating glory that of the Revelation He who has watched a thunder-storm half-formed, or a bright but cloudy sunset, must have observed, with the author of the "Lights and Shadows," "a show of storm, yet feeling of calm, over all that tumultuous yet settled world of cloud." It seemed a tempest of darkness or of light arrested in mid career. An image of the Apocalypse! It is a hubbub of magnificence melting into beauty, and of beauty soaring into sublimity—of terror, change, victory, defeat, shame, and glory, agonies, and ecstasies, chasing each other over a space beneath which hell yawns, above which heaven opens, and around which earth now lightens with the glory of the one, and now darkens with the uprising smoke of the other. Noises, too, there are; the sound of chariots running to battle; the opening of doors in heaven, as if answering the revolving portals of the pit; rejoicings heard in heaven, wailings arising from hell; now the speech of dragons, now the voice of lambs, and anon the roar of lions; great multitudes speaking, earthquakes crashing, trumpets sounding, thunders lifting up their voices—above all this, heard at intervals, the New Song from the lips of the redeemed, amid it, coming up, the thin and thrilling cry of the "souls under the altar;" and behind it, and closing the vision, the united hallelujah of earth and heaven.

The book might thus almost be termed a spiritual oratorio, ready for the transcription of a Handel or a Haydn, and surely supplying a subject equal to "Samson," the "Creation," or the "Messiah." But where now the genius able to play it off, in all its variety and compass? And where the audience who would bear its linked, and swelling, and interchanging, and long-protracted harmonies? Music has echoed divinely the divine words—"Let there be light"—and rolled out in thunder-surges the darkness of the crucifixion, and made the blindness

of the Hebrew Hercules "darkness *audible;*" but it has yet a greater task to do, in incarnating in sound the dumb and dreadful soul of music sleeping in the Apocalypse

But the question may here arise—to what order of poems does the Apocalypse belong—if, indeed, it be a poem at all? We have read much controversy as to its poetical character and form. On the one hand, it has been contended, that its structure, and the frequent occurrence of parallelisms, constitute it entirely a poem; while it is maintained, on the other, that, while poetical passages occur, its general cast is symbolical rather than poetical, and itself no more a poem than the Gospels. We are mistaken if the theory propounded in the third chapter do not embrace and reconcile both those opposite views. There, we maintained that Scripture was composed, partly of poetic statement and partly of poetic song—the former including in it, too, the expression of symbols, which, however plainly stated, are poetical in the truths they shadow, as well as in the shadows themselves. This definition, we think, includes the whole Apocalypse. We have, first, in it the general dogmatic or hortatory matter of the three commencing chapters, which, though full of figure, has no rhythmical rise or melody; secondly, the symbols of the temple and its furniture, the seals, beasts, &c.; thirdly, the songs and ascriptions of thanksgiving sprinkled throughout; and, fourthly, the great story, or plot, which winds its way amid all those strange and varied elements. Thus, all is poetical in essence, but part only poetical in form. The whole is a poem, *i. e.*, a creation; but a creation like God's, containing portions of more and of less intensity and sweetness. The difference between it and the Gospels is chiefly, that they are professedly histories, with fictitious and rhythmical parts; the Apocalypse professedly a vision, with much in it that must be taken literally, and with a profound meaning running through all its symbols and songs. Though a poem, it is not the less *essentially*, though it is the less *literally*, true.

But to what species of poem does it belong? By Eichhorn and others, it is, on account of its changing actors, shifting

scenes, and the presence of a chorus, ranked with the drama. Stuart calls it an epopee; others class it with lyric poems. We are not disposed to coincide entirely with any of those opinions. As well call a series of dissolving views, with the music to which they dissolve or enter, a regular drama, with a regular chorus, as the Apocalypse. A poetic recital of a poetic story it is; but both the story and the recital are far from regular. Lyrics ring in it, like bells amid a midnight conflagration; but, as a whole, it is narrative. Shall we then say of it merely—"I saw a great tumult, and knew not what it was?" Or shall we call it a poem-mystery, acknowledging no rules, including all styles and all forms, and gathering all diversified elements into one glorious, terrible, nondescript *composite?* Has it not unwittingly pair'ed its own image in one of those locusts, which it describes riding over the earth? It is, in its warlike genius, like "unto a horse prepared for the battle." It wears on its head a crown of gold—the gold of towering imagery. Its piercing intuition makes its "face as the face of man, and its teeth as the teeth of a lion." Mystery, like the "hair of woman," floats around it, and hardens into a "breastplate of iron" over its breast. Its "tail stings like a scorpion," in the words—"If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of life, and out of the holy city." And its rapid and rushing eloquence is "like the sound of chariots—of many horses running to battle." *Here*, there may be fancy in our use of the symbols, but the characteristics thus symbolized are realities.

How wonderful the mere outline of this book! The stage, a solitary island,—

"Placed far amid the melancholy main;"

the sole spectator, a gray-haired apostle of Jesus, who once lay on his breast, but is now alone in the world; the time, the Lord's-day, acquiring a deeper sacredness from the surrounding solitude and silence of nature; the appearance of the Universal Bishop, gold-girt, with head and hairs white as snow, flaming

eyes, feet like burning brass, voice as the sound of many waters, the seven stars in his right hand, and walking through the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; his charges to his churches so simple, affectionate, and awful; the opening of a door in heaven; the throne, rainbow-surrounded, fringed by the seven lamps, and seeing its shadow in the sea of glass, mingled with fire; the Lion of the tribe of Judah opening the seals; the coming forth of the giant steeds—one white as the milky banner of the Cross, another red as blood—a third black, and with a rider having a pair of balances in his hand—a fourth pale, and mounted by death; the cry of the souls under the altar; the opening of the sixth seal; the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, and blowing their blasts over a silent world; the sealing of the tribes; the great multitude standing before the Lamb; the volcano cast, like a spark, into the sea; the opening of the bottomless pit; the emergence of those fearful hybrids of hell—the scorpion locusts, with Apollyon as their king; the unwritten words of the seven thunders; the prophesying, and death, and resurrection of the two witnesses; the woman clothed with the sun; that other woman, drunk and drenched in holy blood; the uprising of the twin beasts of crowned blasphemy; the Lamb and his company on the Mount Zion; the angel flying through the midst of heaven, with the Gospel in his mouth; the man on the white cloud, with the gold crown on his head, and the sharp sickle in his hand; the reaping of the harvest of the earth; the vintage of blood; the coming forth from the *smoke of the glory of* God—of the seven angels, with the seven last plagues, clothed with linen, girded with virgin gold, and holding, with hands unharmed and untrembling, the vials full of the wrath of God—one for the earth—one for the sea—one for the fountains of waters—one for the sun, to feed his old flame into tenfold fierceness—one for the seat of the beast—one for the Euphrates—and one for the fire-tormented and earthquake-listening air; the fall of the great city Babylon; the preparations for the battle of Armageddon; the advent of the Captain of the holy host; the battle; the rout

of the beast, and the false prophet driven back upon the lake of fire; the binding of Satan; the reign of Christ and his saints; the final assault of the enemy, Gog and Magog, upon the camp and the holy city; their discomfiture; the uprising, behind it, of the great white throne; and the ultimate and everlasting "Bridal of the earth and sky"—such are the main constituents of this prodigious and unearthly poem, the Apocalypse, or Revelation of Jesus Christ.

But what *saith* this Scripture? of what is this the ciphered story? "Who shall open this book, and loose the seals thereof?" We seem to see ten thousand attenuated forms, and pale and eager countenances, hanging over, and beseeching its obstinate oracle. We remember the circle of books which have, in the course of ages, slowly gathered around it, like planets around the sun, in vain, for how can planets add to the clearness of their central luminary? We remember the fact, that many strong spirits, such as Calvin and Luther, have shrunk from the task of its explication, and that Robert Hall is reported to have said, when asked to undertake it, "Do you wish me in my grave?" We remember that the explanations hitherto given constitute a very chaos of contradictions, and remind us of the

> "Eternal anarchy, amid the noise
> Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.
> For *hot, cold, moist,* and *dry,* four champions fierce,
> Strive here for mast'ry, and to battle bring
> Their embryon atoms; they around the flag
> Of each his faction in their several clans,
> *Light arm'd,* or *heavy, sharp, smooth, swift,* or *slow,*
> Swarm populous."

So that the question still recurs, "Who shall open the book and loose the seals thereof?"

Sin, the sorceress, kept the key of hell. Perhaps to Time, the truth-teller, has been intrusted the key of this chaos; or, perhaps some angel genius, mightier still than Mede, or Elliott, or Croly, may yet be seen speeding, "with a key in his hand,"

to open this surpassing problem, and with "a great chain," to bind its conflicting interpreters. Our notion rather is, that the full solution is reserved for the second coming of Christ; that he alone possesses the key to its mystery, who holds, also, the keys of Hades and of death; and that over this hitherto inscrutable volume, as over so many others, the song shall be sung, "Thou, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof."

We can not close the Apocalypse, without wondering at its singular history. An island dream, despised at first by many, as we would have despised that of a seer of Mull or Benbecula, admitted with difficulty into the canon, has foretold and outlived dynasties—made Popes tremble and toss upon their midnight beds—made conquerors pale, as they saw, or thought they saw, their own achievements traced along its mysterious page, and their own bloody seas anticipated—fired the muse of the proudest poets, and the pencil of the most gifted artists—and drawn, as students and admirers, around its cloudy center, the doctors, and theologians, and philosophers of half the world. And, most wonderful of all, *it has kept its secret*—it has baffled all inquirers, and continues "shrouded and folded up," like a ghost in its own formless shades, ranking thus, *either* with the dreams of mere madness, and forming a silent but tremendous satire on a world of fools, who have consented to believe and to examine it; *or*, as we believe, with those grand enigmas of Nature, Providence, and Faith, which can only be stated, and can only be solved, by God himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE, INFLUENCES, AND EFFECTS OF SCRIPTURE POETRY.

This would demand a volume, instead of a chapter, inasmuch as the influences of Scripture poetry slide away into the influences of Scripture itself. But our purpose is merely, first, to expand somewhat our general statements in the Introduction, as to the superiority of the Bible as a book; and then, secondly, to point out some of the deep effects it has had upon the mind and the literature of the world.

To make a comparative estimate of Scripture poetry is not a complicated task, since the superiority of the Bible poets to the mass of even men of true genius, will not be disputed. Like flies dispersed by an eagle's wing, there are brushed away before them all brilliant triflers, elegant simulators, men who "play well upon an instrument," and who have found that instrument in the lyre—who have turned to common uses the aerolite which has fallen at their door from heaven, and "lightly esteemed" the little, but genuine and God-given, power which is their all. These, too, have a place and a name of their own; but the Anacreons, the Hafizs, the Catulli, and the Moores, must flutter aside from the "terribil *via*" of Moses and David. So, too, must depart the Sauls, and Balaams, and Simon Magi —such as Byron—whom the power lifted up as it passed, contorted into a fearful harmony, and went on its way, leaving them broken and defiled in the dust. Such are among Israel, but not of it—its hope, its God, are not theirs; and even when the language of Canaan is on their lips, it sounds dreary and

strange, as a song of joy from a broken-hearted wanderer upon the midnight streets.

But others there are, who retire from the field with more reluctance—nay, who are disposed to dispute the Hebrew pre-eminence. These consist both of early and of modern singers. Among early poets, may be ranked, not only Homer and Eschylus, but the Vedas of India, the poems of Kalidasa and Firdusi, Sadi and Asmai, as well as the countless fragments of Scandinavian and Celtic song. Of many of such poems, it is enough to say, that their beauties are bedded amid "continents of mud"—mud, too, lashed and maddened into explosions of fanatical folly; and that partly through this environment, and partly through the inferiority of their poetic power, they have not, like the poetry of the Hebrews, naturalized themselves among modern civilized nations.

While the faith, which they have set to song, has seemed repulsive and monstrous, the song itself is broken, turgid, and unequal, compared to the great Psalms and Prophecies of Israel. Humboldt indicates the superiority of Hebrew poetry, and the cause of it, when he says, "It is characteristic of it, that, as a reflex of monotheism, it always embraces the whole world in its unity, comprehending the life of the terrestrial globe, as well as the shining regions of space. It dwells less on details of phenomena, and loves to contemplate great masses. Nature is portrayed, not as self-subsisting or glorious in her own beauty, but ever in relation to a higher, an overruling, a spiritual power."

We are willing to stake the supremacy of the Hebrew Bards over all early singers, upon this ground alone—their method of contemplating nature in its relation to God.

There are three methods of contemplating the universe. These are the material, the shadowy, and the mediatorial. The materialist looks upon it as the only reality. It is a vast solid fact, forever burning and rolling around, below, and above him. The idealist, on the contrary, regards it as a shadow, a mode of mind, the infinite projection of his own thought. The man who

stands between the two extremes, looks on nature as a great, but not ultimate or everlasting, scheme of mediation or compromise between pure and absolute spirit and the incarnate soul of man. To the materialist, there is an altar, star-lighted, heaven-high, but no God. To the idealist, there is a God, but no altar. He who holds the theory of mediation, has the Great Spirit as his God, and the universe as the altar on which he presents the gift of his worship or poetic praise.

It must be obvious at once, which of those three views of nature is the most poetical. It is surely that which keeps the two principles of spirit and matter unconfounded—preserves in their proper relations the soul and the body of things—God within, and without the garment by which, in Goethe's grand thought, "we see him by." While one sect deify, and another destroy matter, the third impregnate, without identifying, it with the divine presence.

The notions suggested by this view, are exceedingly comprehensive and magnificent. Nature, to the poet's eye, becomes "a great sheet let down from God out of heaven," and in which there is no object "common or unclean." The purpose and the Being above cast a greatness over the pettiest or barest objects. Every thing becomes valuable when looked upon as a communication from God, imperfect only from the nature of the material used. What otherwise might have been concluded discords, now appear only undertones in the divine voice; thorns and thistles spring above the primeval curse, while the "meanest flower that blows" gives "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." The creation is neither unduly exalted nor contemptuously trampled under foot, but maintains its dignified position as an embassador from the Divine King. The glory of something far beyond association—that of a divine and perpetual presence—is shed over all things. Objects the most diverse—the cradle of the child, the wet hole of the scorpion, the bed of the corpse, and the lair of the earthquake, the nest of the lark, and the crag on which sits, half-asleep, the dark vulture digesting blood—are all clothed in a light, the same in kind,

though varying in degree—"The light which never was on sea or shore."

But while the great and the infinite are thus connected with the little and the finite, the subordination of the latter to the former is always maintained. The most magnificent objects in nature are but the mirrors to God's face—the scaffolding to his future purposes; and, like mirrors, are to wax dim, and, like scaffolding, to be removed. The great sheet is to be *received up* again into heaven. The heavens and the earth are to pass away, and to be succeeded, if not by a purely mental economy, yet by one of a more spiritual materialism, compared to which the former shall no more be remembered, neither come into mind. Those frightful and fantastic forms of animated life, through which God's glory seems to shine with a struggle, and but faintly, shall disappear; nay, the worlds which bore and sheltered them in their rugged dens and caves, shall flee from the face of the Regenerator. A milder day is to dawn on the universe; the refinement of matter is to keep pace with the elevation of mind. Evil and sin are to be banished to some Siberia of space. The word of the poet is to be fulfilled—"And one eternal spring encircles all!" The mediatorial purpose of creation, fully subserved, is to be abandoned, that we may see "eye to eye," and that God may be "all in all."

Such views of matter—its present ministry, the source of its beauty and glory, and its future destiny—are found in the pages of both Testaments. Their writers have their eyes anointed, to see that they are standing in the midst of a temple—they hear in every breeze and ocean billow the sound of a temple service—and feel that the ritual and its recipient throw the shadow of their greatness upon every stone in the corners of the edifice, and upon every eft crawling along its floors. Reversing the miracle, they see "trees as men walking," hear the speechless sing, and, in the beautiful thought of our noble and gifted "Roman," catch on their ears the fragments of a "divine soliloquy," filling up the pauses in a universal anthem. And, while rejecting the Pagan fable of absorption into the Deity,

and asserting the immortality of the individual soul, they are not blind to the transient character of material things. They see afar off the spectacle of nature retiring before God—the bright toys of this nursery—sun, moon, earth, and stars—put away, like childish things, the symbols of the infinite lost in the infinite itself. The "heavens shall vanish like smoke; the heavens shall be dissolved; the earth shall be removed like a cottage; the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Nowhere in Pagan or mystic epic, dream, drama, or didactic poem, can we find a catastrophe at once so philosophical and so poetical as this.

If we pass from the general idea and spirit of Hebrew poetry, to its parts and details, many may deem that other ancient nations have the advantage. Where, in Scripture, it may be said, a piece of mental masonry so large, solid, and complete, as the Iliad? Where a fiction so varied, interesting, romantic, and gracefully told, as the Odyssey? Where such awful odes to Nemesis and the Furies, as Eschylus has lifted up from his blasted rock, and, in vain, named Dramas? Where the perfect beauty of Sophocles—the Raffaelle of Dramatists? Where the inflamed common-place of Demosthenes, like the simple fire of a household hearth scattered against the foes of Athens with the hand of a giant, or the bold yet beautiful mysticism of Plato, or the divine denial and inspired blasphemy of Lucretius? Have the Hebrews aught, amid their rugged monotonies, that can be compared with all this?

Now, in speaking to this question, we have something to concede and to premise, as we have, in part, premised and conceded before. We grant that there are in Scripture no such elaborate and finished works of *art*, as some of the master-pieces we have named. We grant, too, that, in judging of the *poetic* merit of the Bible, we may be prejudiced in its favor by early associations, by love and faith, just as its detractors, too, may have their internal motives for dislike to it. But we are not without reasons for the preference we give. And these are the following:—

First, Scripture poetry is of an earlier date than Grecian. the Muse of Greece was but a babe at the time that she of Palestine was a woman, with the wings of a great eagle, abiding in the wilderness. This accounts, at once, for her inferiority in art, and her advantage in natural beauty and power.

Secondly, The Poetry of the Hebrews appeared among a rude people, as well as in an early age—a people with few other arts, possessing an imperfect statuary, no painting, and no philosophy, strictly so called. Their poetry stood almost alone, and was neither aided nor enfeebled by the influences of a somewhat advanced civilization. Hence, in criticizing it, we feel we have to do with a severe and simple energy, as unique and indivisible as the torrent which broke forth from the rock in the desert. Like it, too, it seems a voice of nature called into play by the command of God. Whenever a nation possesses only one peculiar gift, it will be generally found that that gift is in perfection. And not more certainly were the Greeks once the undisputed masters of the science of beauty, the Romans of the art of war, and the Italians of painting, than were the Hebrews of the sublime of poetry.

Thirdly, The purity was not inferior to the elevation of their strains. And this, which proves that they came from a higher fountain than that of mere genius, proves also that they are "above all Greek, all Roman fame." Their beauties are "holy beauties, like dew-drops from the womb of the morning." There is the utmost boldness, without the least license, in their poetry. With blushes, we omit to press the contrast betwixt this and the foul offenses, against reverence and decency, found in the cleanest of Pagan poets. Small need for a Christian to spit in the temples of the gods, when their own poets scruple not, habitually and deliberately, to defile them.

Fourthly, Partly from their intense purity, partly from the uniform loftiness of their object, and partly, as we deem, from their peculiar afflatus, the bards of the Bible carry the credentials of a *power* unrivaled and alone. Homer and Virgil are the demi-gods of scholars and school-boys; Sophocles and Lu-

cretius, the darlings of those who worship a higher art; and Plato, the favorite prose-poet of the devotees of ethnic philosophy. But the children, in all civilized nations, weep at the tale of Joseph, or tremble at the picture of Moses on the Mount; every female heart has inscribed on it the story of Ruth and the figure of Mary; the dreams, even of skeptics, are haunted by the glories of the Christian heaven or the terrors of the Christian hell; and on the lips of the dying, float, faintly or fully, snatches from the Psalms of David, or the sayings of Jesus. The name "Jesus," owns one, who, we hope, shall yet feel more than he does his full claims, "is not so much written, as it is plowed into the mind of humanity." Even supposing their divine pretensions untrue, yet here is literary *power*—"*this* is true fame"—the only fame deserving that firmamental name, and which not chance, nor antiquity, nor prejudice, nor the influence of criticism, but merit, must have won. Not chance, for as soon could atoms have danced without music into a world, as could such and so many winged words have fortuitously assembled—not antiquity, for this only increases the marvel—not prejudice, for have not the prejudices of the world been at least as strong as those of the church, and has not the world regarded the songs of Zion much as the English, behind Harold's entrenchments, the minstrelsy of the Norman trouveurs, and yet owned their music and felt their power—not the influence of criticism, for who ever sought to *write up* the literature of the Bible, or even gave it its just meed of praise, till long after it had wreathed itself round the imagination and the heart of mankind? But how better, or how at all, solve the problem of such power, save by drawing the old conclusion, "This cometh from the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." No book like this. It has stunned into wonder those whom it has not subdued into worship; electrified those whom it has not warmed; established its reign in an enemy's country; and, while principally seeking the restoration of man's moral nature, it has captivated eternally his imagination,

and cast a shadow of eclipse upon the brightest glories of his fiction and his poetry.

For, after the concession made in regard to artistic purpose and polish, we are willing to accept the critical challenge given us, as to the poetic beauty of the Scriptures. We dare prefer Job to Eschylus and to Homer, and even Hazlitt and Shelley have done so before us. There is no ode in Pindar equal to the "Song of the Bow," and no chorus in Sophocles to the "Ode" of Habakkuk. In all the "Odyssey" there is nothing so pathetic and primitive as "Ruth," and the story of Joseph. Achilles arming for battle is tame to the coming forth, in the Apocalypse, of Him, whose "name is Faithful and True;" who is "clothed in a vesture dipped in blood;" and "treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Jeremiah and Nahum make the martial fire of the "Iliad" pale. The descriptions of natural objects in Lucretius seem small when compared with the massive pictures of David and Job. If he has been said "divinely to deny the divine," the bards of Israel have far more divinely confessed and reflected it, till you cry—"It is the voice of a God, not of a man." The questions of Demosthenes, what are they to those of Ezekiel or Amos, sublime and fearful as the round sickle of the waning moon? Plato and the elements of his philosophy lie quietly inclosed in some of Solomon's sentences; and, transcendently above all, whether Roman, Greek, or Hebrew, tower two, mingling their notes with the songs of angels—the Divine Man, who spake the Sermon on the Mount, and the Prophet who stood in spirit beside his Cross, and sang of him whose face was more marred than that of man, and his form than that of the sons of men.

The great modern poets still remain. And here we find but four who can even be named in the comparison—Dante, Shakspeare, Milton, and Goethe. First, Dante comes forward reluctantly, for not Virgil nor Beatrice are dearer to him than Moses and Isaiah. Indeed, the Hebrew bards, and not the Mantuan poet, are his real "masters." "He is indebted," says Hazlitt, "to the Bible for the gloomy tone of his mind, as well as for the

prophetic fury which exalts and kindles his poetry." He owes, we should rather say, his gloomy tone of mind to himself, and the truths and visions, which frequently cheer it, to the Bible. But the second part of the sentence is true. The moral severity of tone, the purged perdition poured out upon his enemies, the air of exultation with which he recounts their sufferings, remind us of Ezekiel, or of him who said—"Thou art righteous, O Lord! who hast judged thus, and hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." In his union, too, of a severe and simple style, with high idealism of conception, he resembles the Scripture writers, whose visions are so sublime, that they need only to be transcribed to produce their full effect. His child-like tone is also Scriptural—a tone, we may remark, preserved fully in no translation, save one in prose we read lately,* which reminded us of the "Pilgrim's Progress." But, while the prophets *are* the masters, Dante is obviously but a scholar. His vehemence and fury compared to theirs resemble furnace, beside starry, flames. Too much of personal feeling mingles with his prophetic ire. And while possessing more of the subtilty which distinguishes the Italian mind, he has not such wealth of imagery, and towering grandeur of eloquence, as the Hebrews, little or nothing of their lyrical impulse, and while at home in hell, he does not tread the Empyrean with such free and sovereign steps, although there, too, he has a right, and knows he has a right to be.

Shakspeare—nature's favorite, though unbaptized and unconsecrated, child—has derived less from Scripture than any other great modern author, and affords fewer points of comparison with it. He was rather a piece of nature than a prophet. His real religion, as expressed in the words, "We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep," seems to have been a species of ideal Pantheism. He loved the fair face of nature; he saw also its *poetic* meaning; but did not feel, nor has expressed so deeply its under-current of moral law nor the sublime attitude it exhibits, as leaning upon its

* By Dr. John Carlyle.

God. Hence, while the most wide and genial, and one of the least profane, he is also one of the least religious of poets. His allusions to Scripture, and to the Christian faith, are few and undecided. He has never even impersonated a character of high religious enthusiasm. He never, we think, could have written a good sacred drama; and had he tried to depict a Luther, a Knox, a Savonarola, or any character in whose mind one great, earnest idea was predominant, he had failed. The gray, clear, catholic sky behind and above, would have made such volcanoes pale. Had he written on Knox, Queen Mary would have carried away all his sympathies; or, on Luther, he would have been more anxious to make Tetzel ridiculous, than the Reformer reverend or great. Shakspeare was not, in short, an earnest man, hardly even—strange as the assertion may seem—an enthusiast, and, therefore, stood in exact contrast to the Hebrew bards. He often trifled with his universal powers —they devoted the whole of their one immense talent to God. He, like his own Puck or Ariel, loved to live in the colors of the rainbow, to play in the plighted clouds, to do his spiriting gently, when he did it, but better still to swing in the "blossom that hangs from the bough;" they were ready-girt, stripped, and sandaled, as those "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation." He seemed sometimes waiting upon the wing for a great commission, which never came—the burden of the Lord lay always upon their spirits. He was of the "earth earthy," the truest and most variegated emanation from its soil; but they light upon the mountains like sunbeams from a higher region. Even of the "myriad-minded" Shakspeare may we not say, that "he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he;" and that "a little child" like John "might lead" this giant of the drama, and miracle of men.

Milton, on the other hand, seems almost a belated bard of the Bible. And this not simply on account of his genius, or of the deep tinge of Hebraism which his studies gave to all his writings, but because he has sought his inspiration from the same sources. He has gone to the depths of his moral, as well

as mental nature, in search of the fountains of poesy. He has cried aloud to the Eternal Spirit to send his seraphim to touch his lips with a live coal from his altar. Hence his writings have attained a certain sifted purity we can find nowhere else out of Scripture. Hence a settled unity and magnificence of purpose, which no defects in the mere mechanism of composition, nor sinkings in energy, can disturb. Hence the quotations from the Bible fall sweetly into their places along his page, and find at once suitable society. Warton, in an ingenious paper in the "Adventurer," ascribes Milton's superiority over the ancients to the use he has made of Scripture; he might rather have traced it to the sympathy with the Hebrew genius, which has made his use of it so wise, and so effectual; for mere crude quotations, or dextrous imitation, would never have elevated him to such a height. Unless, in conscious majesty, he had "come unto his own," his own would not have received him. Had not his nature been supernal, his thefts had not been counted the thefts of a god.

But even in Milton's highest flights we miss much, besides the untransferable prophetic differentia of the Bible poets. He has not the perfect ease of motion which distinguishes them. He is a "permitted guest;" they are "native and endued" to the celestial element. He is intensely conscious of himself—never forgets who it is that sits on the fiery chariot, and passes through the gates into the presence of the "thousand ardors;" they are lost, though not blasted, in the ocean of light and glory. He may be likened to one of those structures of art, the pyramids, or the ministers which nature seems to "adopt into her race"—the Hebrews to the cathedrals of the woods, made oracular at evening by the wind of Heaven.

Goethe, we know, admired the Bible as a composition, took great interest in its geography, and had his study hung round with maps of the Holy Land. But even less than Shakspeare did he resemble its poets. Universal genius bred in Shakspeare a *love* for all things which he knew, without much enthusiasm for any in particular. An inferior, but more highly cultured

degree of the same power, led Goethe to universal *liking*, which at a distance seemed, and in some degree was, indifference. His great purpose, after the fever of youth was spent, was to build up his Ego, like a cold, majestic statue, and to surround it with offerings from every region—from earth, heaven, and hell! He transmuted all things into ink; he analyzed his tears ere suffering them to fall to the ground; his tortures he tortured in search of their inmost meaning; his vices he rolled like a sweet morsel, that he might know their ultimate flavor, and what legacy of lesson they had to leave him; his mental battles he fought o'er again, that he might become a mightier master of spiritual tactics; like the ocean, whatever came within his reach, was engulfed, was drenched in the main element of his being, went to swell his treasures, and generally "suffered a sea-change," into "something" at once "rich," "strange," and cold. This was not the manner of the rapt, God-filled, self-emptied, sin-denouncing, impetuous, and intense bards of Israel. Could we venture to conceive Isaiah, or Ezekiel, entering Goethe's chamber at Weimar, and uttering one of their divine rhapsodies—how mildly would he have smiled upon the fire-eyed stranger—how attentively heard him—how calmly sought to measure and classify him—how punctually recorded in his journal the appearance of an "extraordinary human meteor, a wonderful specimen of uncultured genius"—and how complacently inferred his own superiority! But no; the chill brow of Chimborazo is indeed higher far than the thunder-storm leading its power and terrible beauty along his sides, and is nearer the sun; but the sun there is rayless and cold, the air around is eternal frost, the calm and silence are those of death; whereas a hundred valleys below hear in the thunder the voice, and see in the lightning the footsteps, of God: the one is eloquent, although it be with warning; and the other warm, although it be with wrath.

In that glorification of Goethe, so common in the present day, we see an attempt to exalt art above nature, culture above genius, study above impulse, the artist above the poet—an at-

tempt with which we have no sympathy. No doubt, a certain measure of culture is now, as it always was, necessary to men of genius; but surely this is not an age in which culture is so neglected, that we need inculcate it at the expense of original power. Nay, it is now so generally and equally diffused, and its effects are so frequently confounded with the miracles of genius, that it becomes incumbent on the critic, with peculiar sternness, to point to the impassable gulf of distinction, and to assert that there is still a certain inspiration

> "Which comes and goes like dream,
> And which none can ever trace;"

"a wind which bloweth where it listeth"—a mysterious something which no culture can give, and no lack of it can altogether take away. It is the tendency of the age—a low and infidel tendency—to trace every phenomenon, both of mind and matter, downward, through developments and external influences, instead of upward, through internal and incalculable powers. Genius, with our modern philosophers, is only a curious secretion of the brain; poetry must be "scientific," else it is naught. Shakspeare, indeed, was an "extraordinary development;" but our poetical bees must not now be permitted to follow their own divine instinct in building the lofty rhyme —they must to school, and be taught geometry. And let none dare to suck at the breasts of the Mighty Mother, till he has been elaborately trained how to do it! The first principle of this criticism is, to avoid faults, and the second, to shun beauties. Beware of too many fine things. Remember the couplet—

> "Men doubt, because so thick they lie,
> If they be stars, that paint the galaxy."

Now the secret of this sophistry seems to lie in the confusion between the truly and the falsely fine. Can too many really new and beautiful things be said on any subject? Can there

be too many stars in an unbounded universe? If artistic perfection is to be sought at the price even of one consummate pearl—perhaps the seed-pearl of a great truth—were it not better lost? Even were it only a beautiful image, should it be permitted to perish? for does not every beautiful image represent, at least, the bright edge or corner of a truth? No fear that books, all-beautiful and full of meaning, shall be unduly multiplied. As well be alarmed for the advent of perfect men. Of too much truth or beauty let us complain, when we have had a spring day too delightful, a sunbeam too delicately spun, an autumn too abundant. The finest writers in the world have been the most luxuriant. Witness Jeremy Taylor, Shakspeare, Milton, Burke, and the Hebrew bards. It is an age of barren or cold thinkers which finds out that the past has been too rich and tropical—wishes that Job had shorn his Behemoths and Leviathans, and Isaiah let blood ere he uttered his cries against Egypt and Assyria; and not only admires a book more, because its faults are few, than because its beauties are many, but regards the thick glories which genius may have dropped upon it, as blemishes—its "many crowns," as proud and putrid ulcers. And, with regard to the vaunted couplet quoted above, we may remember that the nebular hypothesis is exploded. They *are* stars, nay suns, which paint our and every other galaxy!

The effects of all this, against which we protest, have been to crown Goethe "a mockery-king of snow" over our modern poetry—to create a style of misty and pretentious criticism, forever appealing to certain assumed principles, but destitute of genuine instinctive insight into poetry, and of its clear, manly, and fervid expression—to rear a set of poets who elaborately imitate the German giants, especially in their faults, and deliberately "darken counsel by words without knowledge"—to substitute for the living and blood-warm raptures of poesy, rhapsodies at once mad and measured, extravagant and cold, obscure and shallow—and to dethrone for a time the great ancient Kings of the Lyre, who "spake as they were moved."

and whose impetuous outpourings arranged themselves into beauty, created their own principles of art, and secured their own immortality, as they fell, clear and hot, from the touched spirit and glowing heart. We need scarcely add, that while much of the popular poetry of the day is cold with unbelief, or dark with morbid doubt, that which it seeks to supersede was the flower of a rooted religious faith.

We come now to speak of the influences of Scripture poetry. And these include its religious and intellectual influences. How much religion owes to poetry! There is not a form of it so false, but has availed itself of the aid of song. Thor and Woden loom and lean over us, from the north, through the mist of poetry, like the Great Bear and Arcturus shining dimly down through the shifting vail of the Aurora. Seeva, Bramah and Vishnu, have all had their laureates, and the wheels of Juggernaut have moved to the voice of hymns and music. Mohammed is the hero of ten thousand parables, poems, and tales in the East. The Fire-god of Persia has been sung in many a burning strain. The wooden or stone idols of Africa have not wanted their singers. Pantheism itself has inspired powerful and eloquent strains. Lucretius has extracted a wild and magnificent music from Atheism—a music played off on the dry bones of a dead universe. Every belief or nonbelief has found its poetry, excepting always modern materialism, as represented by the utilitarian philosophy. There is no speculation in *its* eye—no man of genius can make it beautiful, because it has not one beautiful element in it, and because no man of genius can believe it; its sole music is the chink of money; its main theological principle (the gradual development of mud into man, and dirt into deity) is as incapable of poetic treatment as it is of scientific proof; and what, unless to place it as a prime article in the museum of human folly, can be done to a *caput mortuum* so hateful and so helpless?

If poetry has thus fanned the flames of false religions, much more might it have been expected to advance the interests and glorify the doctrines of the true. And hence, from the begin-

ning, poetry has been a "Slave of the Lamp" to the monotheistic faith. The first thunder-word (Be light) that startled the silence of the primeval deep, was a word of poetry. The first promise made to fallen man (that of the woman's seed) was uttered in poetry. In the language of figure and symbol, God spake to the patriarchs. Moses, the legislator of Israel, was a poet; the scene at Sinai was full of transcendent poetical effect—the law was given amid the savage minstrelsies of tempest and of thunder. In later ages, the flame of Jewish piety was now stirred by the breath of prophetic song, and now sunk into ashes, when that died away. The gospel was born to the sound of angelic harmonies; its first utterance was in heavenly poetry and praise. And to poetry and song, the present system is to pass away; the grave to open to its golden strains; the books of judgment, at its bidding, are to expand their oracular pages; and when the fairer creation descends, again are the morning stars to sing together, and all the sons of God to shout for joy.

It is not easy, too, to say how much, even now, the poetic form of Scripture contributes to its preservation, and to its spread through the world. Its poetry charms many of its professed enemies; and, as they listen to its old and solemn harmonies, their right hand forgets its cunning, and, instead of casting stones at it, they become stones themselves. The officers who were sent to apprehend Christ went away, exclaiming—"Never man spake like this man." So many, who have drawn near the Bible, as executors, not of another's, but of their own hatred, have said, as they turned at last from it, lest they should be entirely subdued—"Never book spake like this book." Its poetical beauty has had another influence still, in regard to those of its foes who have ventured to assail it. It has served to expose and shame, and to rouse general feeling against them. Never does a ruffian look more detestable, than when insulting the beautiful; never is a hoof more hateful, than when trampling on a rose. When a Lauder snatches rudely at the laurels of a Milton, intellectual Britain starts up to resent the outrage

When even the foul spittle of a sick and angry giant falls awry, and threatens to sully the fair fame of a Howard, we have seen lately how dangerous it is for the greatest to tamper with the verdicts of the universal human heart. And so the few, such as Paine, who have insulted the Hebrew or Greek Scriptures, have been blasted with unanimous reprobation. It has fared with them, as with Uzziah, when he went in to profane the temple of the Lord. That instant the fatal spot of leprosy rose to his brow, and, while all around sought to thrust him out, he himself hastened to depart. In fact, the love that beats in the general bosom to this book is never disclosed till at such times, when thousands, who care little for its precepts, and are skeptical of its supreme authority, rise up, nevertheless, in indignation, and say—"The man who abuses the Bible, insults the race: in trampling on a book so beautiful, and that has been so widely believed, he is trampling on all of us, and on himself. Let him, as a moral leper, be dragged without the gate, and perish in his own shame." So wisely has God guarded his Book, by the awful beauty which, like a hedge of roses mingled with thorns, surrounds it all.

The same environment of poetry has not only prevailed to defend, but to circulate the Bible. It has opened to it the hearts of children, who, although unable to comprehend even partially its doctrines, and feeling much in its precepts that is repulsive to their early and evil instincts, yet leap instantly to its loveliness, its interest, pathos, and simple majesty. Many have sought to panegyrize the Scriptures; but, of all such attempts, only the panting praises of the dying, such as the words of Crabbe, when he said—"That blessed book—that blessed book!"—can be compared with the encomiums which the lips and the looks, the day and the night dreams, of the young have passed upon it. Perdition is often wrapped up in jelly for infant palates; but "here is wisdom" the divinest, employed in hiding the medicine of eternal life, amid the sweet preparations of the Psalms, the stories, and the imagery of the Book of God.

This beauty is as humble as it is high. It enters into the lowliest cottages, secure, like our illustrious sovereign, in her own native dignity and lofty innocence. No altar for this divine Book superior to the dusty table of the poor, where, amid foul fire and smoke, and fouler hearts, it lies day and night, gradually clearing the atmosphere, and changing the natures around it—where, at first regarded with awe, as a powerful foe, it is next admired as an intelligent companion, and at last taken to the heart, as the best friend. Fine, the "big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride," produced by the gray-haired sage of the simple, pious family; but finer still, the Book dropped into a godless house, and there left alone, save for the spirit-light of its own pages, to work its way and God's will, till, at last, it becomes the center and the eye, the master and the magnet, of the dwelling. And, but for its beauty, would it so soon have won a triumph like this?

This beauty, too, is free of the world. It passes, unshorn and unmingled, into every language and every land. Wherever the Bible goes, "beauty," in the words of rhe poet, "pitches her tents before it." Appealing, as its poetry does, to the primitive principles, elements, and "all that must eternal be," of the human mind—using the oldest speech, older than Hebrew, that of metaphors and symbols—telling few, but lifelike, stories —and describing scenes which paint themselves easily and forever on the heart—it needs little more introduction than does a gleam of sunshine or a flash of lightning. It soon domesticates itself among the Caffres, or the Negroes, or the Hindoos, or the Hottentots, or the Chinese, who all feel it to be intensely human, before they feel it to be divine. What heart but must palpitate at the sight of this Virgin Daughter of the Most High, going forth from land to land, with no dower but innocence, and with no garment but beauty; yet powerful in her loveliness as light, and in her innocence safe as her Father who is in heaven?

Or, let us look at the influences her beauty exerts among the advanced and the intelligent of her votaries. These have per-

haps been at first attracted by this to her feet. They have loved her beauty before they knew her worth, for often

> "You must love her, ere to you
> She doth seem worthy of your love."

And even after they have learned to value her for her internal qualities, the enchantment of her loveliness remains. The love of their espousals is never wholly lost; and they say, with exultation—"Our beloved is not only a king's daughter, and all-glorious within, but she is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun." Nay, even when doubts as to this royal origin may at times cross their mind, they are re-assured by gazing again at her transcendent beauty, and seeing the blood of heaven blushing in her cheek. In the poetical beauty and grandeur of Scripture, we have, as it were, a perpetual miracle attesting its divine origin, after the influence of its first miracles has in a great measure died away, and although all now be still around Sinai's mount, and upon Bethlehem's plains.

Perhaps it may be thought that we are attributing too much to the influence of beauty. Does not the Bible owe much more to its divine truth? and does it not detract from that truth, to say that beauty has done so much? But, first, we do not maintain that its beauty has done so much as its truth; secondly, the influence of beauty has been subsidiary and subordinate; thirdly, had there been no background of truth, the influence of beauty would have been inconsiderable and transient; and, fourthly, the beauty is of that purged and lofty order which betokens the presence of the highest truth—the wings are those of angels, the flowers those of the garden of God.

We say not that the beauty of Scripture ever did, or ever can, convert a soul; but it may often have attracted men to those means of spiritual influence where conversion is to be found. The leaves, not the flowers, of the tree of life, are for the healing of the nations; but surely the flowers have often first fascinated the eye of the wanderer, and led him near to eat and live. When Christianity arose, it "streamed," says Eusebius,

"over the face of the earth like a sunbeam;" and men were too much struck by its novelty, its bright and blessed revelations, its adaptation to their wants, to think much of the lovely hues and soft charms, and lofty graces, by which it was surrounded. It is very different now, when it needs a perception of all those subsidiary attractions to induce multitudes of the refined and intellectual to devote due investigation to its claims.

And besides such direct effects of Scripture poetry in drawing men to inquire into Scripture truth, and in confirming Christians in their attachment to it, there is a silent but profound indirect moral power wielded by it in the world. It has refined society, softened the human heart, promoted deference and respect to woman, and tenderness to children, cleansed to a great degree the temple of our literature, and especially of our poetry and fiction—denounced licentiousness, while inculcating forgiveness and pity to those led astray, and riotous living, while smiling upon social intercourse—suspended the terrors of its final judgment over high as well as low, over the sins of the heart as well as of the conduct, over rich and respectable children of hell as well as over the devil's pariahs and poor slaves—and has branded such public enormities as war, slavery, and capital punishments, with the inexpiable mark of its spirit, and is destroying them by the breath of its power. We say Scripture *poetry* has done all this; for how feeble and ineffectual had been mere enactments and precepts, compared with the poems in which the gospel principles have been inscribed—the parables in which they have been incarnated—compared to such living scenes as Jesus holding up a child in the midst of his disciples, or saying to the woman taken in adultery, "Go and sin no more," or commending his mother to his beloved disciple from the cross, or making water into wine at Cana, or feasting with publicans and sinners—or to such pictures as Dives tormented in that flame, or of Christ seated on the great white throne—or to such denunciations as his reverberated woes against the formalists and hard-hearted professors of his day! If our antiquated Jerichos of evil be tottering, and have already

to some extent tottered down, it is owing to the shout of poetic attack with which the genius of Christianity has been so long assailing them.

We pass to speak of the intellectual influences of Scripture poetry. And these, also, are of two kinds—direct and indirect: direct, as coming on minds from the immediate battery of the Bible itself; and indirect, as transmitted through the innumerable writers who have received and modified the shock.

In order to try to form some conception of the influence of the Scriptures upon the minds of the millions who have read them, let our readers ask each at himself the question, "What have I gained from their perusal?" And if he has read them for himself, and with an ordinary degree of intelligence, there must arise before his memory a "great multitude which no man can number," of lofty conceptions of God—of glimpses into human nature—of thoughts "lying too deep for tears"—of pictures, still or stormy, passing from that page to the canvas of imagination to remain forever—of emotions, causing the heart to vibrate with a strange joy, "which one may recognize in more exalted stages of his being"—of inspirations, raising for a season the reader to the level of his author—and of perpetual whispered impressions, "This is the highest thought and language I ever encountered; I am standing on the pinnacle of literature." And then, besides, he will remember how often he returned to this volume, and found the charm remaining, and the fire still burning, and the fountain of thought and feeling (thought suggestive, feeling creative) still flowing—how every sentence was found a text, and how many texts resembled deep and deepening eyes, "orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death"—how each new perusal showed firmament above firmament, rising in the book as in the night sky, till at last he fell on his knees, and, forgetting to read, began to wonder and adore—how, after this trance was over, he took up the book again, and found that it was not only a telescope to show him things above, but also a microscope to show him things below, and a mirror to reflect his own heart, and a magic glass to bring

the future near—and how, at last, he was compelled to exclaim, "How dreadful is this book; it is none other than the book of God; it is the gate of heaven!" Multiply this, the experience of one, by an unknown number of millions, and you have the answer to the question as to the direct intellectual influence of the Scriptures upon those who have really read them.

But it is more to our purpose to trace the influence it has radiated upon the pages of modern authors, and which from thence has been reflected on the world. Let a rapid glance suffice.

Dante, we have seen, has snatched fire from the Hebrew sun, to light up his own deep-sunk Cyclopean hearth. Tasso's great poem is "Jerusalem Delivered," and the style, as well as the subject, shows the influence of Scripture upon a feebler and more artificial spirit than Dante's. Spenser has been called by Southey a "high-priest;" and his "Faery Queen," in its pure moral tone, nothing lessened by its childlike *naiveté* and plain-spoken descriptions, as well as in its gorgeous allegory, betrays the diligent student of the "Song," the Parables, and the Prophets. Giles and Phineas Fletcher—the one in his "Temptation and Victory of Christ," and the other in his "Purple Island"—are more deeply indebted to the Scriptures; their subjects are more distinctly sacred, and their piety more fervid than Spenser's, their master. George Herbert was called by excellence "holy," and his "Temple" proclaims him a poet "after God's own heart:" it is cool, chaste, and still, as the Temple of Jerusalem on the evening after the buyers and sellers were expelled. The genius, rugged and grand, of Dr. Donne, and that of Quarles, so quaint and whimsical, and that of Cowley, so subtile and cultured, were all sanctified. Of Milton, what need we say? His poems deserve, much more than Wisdom or Ecclesiasticus, to be bound up between the two Testaments. Nor let us omit a sacred poem, to which he was somewhat indebted, "The Weeks and Works of Du Bartas," a marvelous medley of childish weakness and manly strength, with more seed-poetry in it than any poem, except "Festus"—the chaos of a hundred poetic worlds

Bunyan seems to have read scarcely a book but the Bible. When he quotes it, it is by chapters at a time, and he has nearly quoted it all. He seems to think and dream, as well as speak and write, in Scripture language. Scripture imagery serves him for fancy—for, with the most vivid of imaginations, fancy he has none—and Scripture words for eloquence, for, though his invention be Shaksperean, his language is bare and bald. He alone could have counterfeited a continuation of the Bible! He was not the modern Isaiah or Jeremiah, for he had no lofty eloquence; and his pathos was wild and terrible rather than soft or womanly—the "Man in the Cage" is his saddest picture; but he was the modern Ezekiel, in his vehement simplicity, his burning zeal, and the almost diseased objectiveness of his genius. Macaulay says, there were in that age but two men of original genius—the one wrote the "Paradise Lost," and the other the "Pilgrim's Progress;" and he might have added, that both seemed incarnations of the spirit of Hebrew poetry, and that the tinker had more of it than the elaborate poet. The age of Elisha and Amos seemed to have rolled round, when from among the basest of the people sprang up suddenly this brave man, like the figure in his own Pilgrim, and cried out to the Recorder of immortal names, "Set mine down," and the song was straightway raised over him—

> "Come in, come in,
> Eternal glory thou shalt win."

Macaulay, however, here is wrong; and has sacrificed, as not unfrequently is his manner, the truth on the sharp prong of an antithesis. There were in that age men of original genius besides Milton and Bunyan; and almost all of them had baptized it at "Siloa's brook, which flowed hard by the oracle of God." Cromwell's sword was a "right Jerusalem blade." Hobbes himself had studied Scripture, and borrowed from it the names of his books, "Behemoth" and "Leviathan." If a Goliath of Gath, he came at least from the borders of the land of promise. Jeremy Taylor soared and sang like Isaiah. John Scott copied

the severe sententiousness and unshrinking moral anatomy of James; and had besides touches of sublimity, reminding you of the loftier of the minor prophets. Barrow reasoned as if he had sat, a younger disciple, at the feet of Paul's master, Gamaliel. John Howe rose to calm Platonic heights, less through the force of Plato's attraction than that of the beloved disciple. And Richard Baxter caught, carried into his pulpit, and sustained even at his solitary desk, the old fury of pure and passionate zeal for God, hatred at sin, and love to mankind, which shook the body of Jeremiah, and flamed round the head and beard, and shaggy raiment of the Baptist.

In the century that succeeded—even in the "godless eighteenth century"—we find numerous traces of the power of the Bible poetry. The allegories, and all the other serious papers of Addison, are tinged with its spirit. He loves not so much its wilder and higher strains; he gets giddy on the top of Lebanon, the valley of dry bones he treads with timid steps, and his look cast up toward the "terrible crystal," is rather of fright than of admiration. Well able to appreciate the "pleasures," he shrinks from those tingling "pains" of imagination. Nor has he much sympathy with that all-absorbing earnestness which surrounded the prophets. But the lovelier, softer, simpler, and more pensive parts of the Bible are very dear to the gentle "Spectator." The "Song" throws him into a dim and languishing ecstasy. The stories of Joseph and of Ruth are the models of his exquisite simplicity; and the 8th and 104th Psalms, of his quiet and timorous grandeur. We hear of Addison "hinting a fault, and hesitating dislike;" but, more truly, he hints a beauty, and stammers out love. He says himself the finest thing, and then blushes, as if detected in a crime. Or he praises an obvious and colossal merit in another; and if he has done it above his breath, he "starts at the sound himself has made." His encomiums are the evening whispers of lovers —low, sweet, and trembling. Thus timidly has he panegyrized the beauties of the Bible; but his graceful imitations, and particularly his vision of Mirza (was he ashamed of it, too, and there-

fore left it a fragment?)—so Scriptural in its spirit, style, and nameless, unconscious charm—show how deeply they had engraved themselves upon his heart.

Even Pope, the most artificial of true poets, has found "his own" in Scripture poetry. Isaiah's dark, billowy forests have little beauty in his eye; but he has collected the flowers which grow beneath, and woven them into that lovely garland, the "Messiah." In his hands, Homer the sublime becomes Homer the brilliant, and Isaiah the majestic becomes Isaiah the soft and elegant. But, as Warton remarks, Pope's "Messiah" owes its superiority to Virgil's "Pollio," entirely to the Hebrew poets. Young has borrowed little from them, or from any one else; he is the most English original poet of the eighteenth century; his poetry comes from a fierce fissure in his own heart: still, the torch by which he lights himself through the "Night" of his "Thoughts" has been kindled at the New Testament; and his "Last Day," and his "Paraphrase on Job," are additional proofs of the ascendency of the Hebrew genius over his own. Thomson's Hymn is avowedly in imitation of the latter Psalms; and his mind, in its sluggish magnificence and lavish ornaments, is distinctly Oriental. Every page of the "Seasons" shows an imagination early influenced by the breadth, fervor, and magniloquence of prophetic song. Johnson, too, in his "Rasselas," "Rambler," and "Idler," is often highly Oriental, and has caught, if not the inmost spirit, at least the outer roll and volume, of the style of the prophets. Burke, in his "Regicide Peace," approaches them far more closely, and exhibits their spirit as well as style, their fiery earnestness, their abruptness, their impatience, their profusion of metaphor, their "doing well to be angry, even unto death," and the contortions by which they were delivered of their message, as of a demon. How he snatches up their words, like the fallen thunderbolts of the Titan war, to heave them at his and their foes! No marvel that the cold-blooded eighteenth century thought him mad. Burns admired his Bible better than he ever cared to acknowledge; and during his last illness, at the Brow, was often seen with it in his hands. Some of the

finest passages in both his prose and verse are colored by Scripture, and leave on us the impression, that, had he looked at it more through his own naked eagle-eye, and less through the false media of systems, and commentaries, and critics, he had felt it to be the most humane, the most liberal, the least aristocratic, the most loving, as well as the sublimest and the one divine book in the world. As it was, that dislike to it natural to all who disobey its moral precepts, was aggravated in him by the wretchedly cold critical circles among whom he fell, who in their hearts preferred Racine's "Athalie" to the Lamentations, and "Douglas" to Job. Hence he praises Scripture with something like misgiving, and speaks of the *pompous* language of the Hebrew bards, an epithet which he means partly in praise, but partly also in blame, and applies to the expression, as simple as it is sublime, "Who walketh on the wings of the wind."

Cowper, the most timid of men, was, so far as *moral* courage went, the most daring of poets. He was an oracle, hid not in an oak, but in an aspen. His courage, indeed, sometimes seems the courage of despair. Hopeless of heaven, he fears nothing on earth. "How can I fear," says Prometheus, "who am never to die?" How can I fear, says poor, unhappy Cowper, who shall never be saved? And in nothing do we see this boldness more exemplified than in his "Bibliolatry." Grant that Bibliolatry it was; it was the extreme of an infinitely worse extreme. In an age when religion was derided, when to quote the Bible was counted eccentric folly, when Lowth was writing books to prove the prophets "elegant," a nervous hypochondriac ventured to prefer them by infinitude to all other writers, defended their every letter, drank into their sternest spirit, and poured out strains which, if not in loftiness or richness, yet in truth, energy, earnestness, and solemn pathos, seem omitted or mislaid "burdens of the Lord." Blessings on this noble "Castaway," rising momentarily o'er the moonlit surge, which he dreamed ready to be his grave, and shouting at once words of praise to that Luminary which was never to rescue him,

and words of warning to those approaching the same fearful waters.

In the nineteenth century, all our great British authors have more or less imbibed fire from the Hebrew fountains. There had been, in the mean time, a reaction in the favor of them, as well as of other things "old." For fifty years, the Bible, like its author, had been exposed on a cross to public ignominy; gigantic apes, like Voltaire, chattering at it; men of genius turned, by some Circean spell, into swine, like Mirabeau, and Paine, casting filth against it; demoniacs, whom it had half-rescued and half-inspired, like Rousseau, making mouths in its face; till, as darkness blotted out the heaven above, and an earthquake shook Europe around, and all things seemed rushing into ruin, men began to feel, as they did on Calvary, that this was all for *Christ's sake;* and they trembled; and what their brethren there could not or did not—they stopped ere it was too late. The hierophants of the sacrilege, indeed, were dead or hopelessly hardened, but their followers paused in time; and the mind of the civilized world was shaken back into an attitude of respect, if not of belief, in the Book of Jesus.

This reaction was for a season complete. No poetry, no fiction, no belles lettres, no philosophy, was borne with, unless it professed homage to Christianity. And even after, through the influence of the "Edinburgh Review," and other causes, there was a partial revival of the skeptical spirit, it never ventured on such daring excesses again. It bowed before the Bible, although it was sometimes with the bow of a polite assassin, who had studied murder and manner both in the south.

Nay, more, Scripture poetry began to be used as a model more extensively than even heretofore, alike by those who believed and those who disbelieved its supreme authority. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, we name first, because they never lost faith in it as a word, or admiration of it as a poem; and hence its language and its element seem more natural to them than to others. Campbell was attracted to it originally by his exquisite poetical taste. He came forth to see the "Rainbow," like some of the

world's "gray fathers," because it was beautiful; but ultimately, we rejoice to know, he felt it to be the "rainbow of the covenant." He grew up to the measure and the stature of his own poetry. Moore, like Pope, has been fascinated by its flowers; and we find him now imitating the airy gorgeousness of the "Song of Songs," and now the diamond-pointed keenness of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Scott, as a writer, knew the force of Scripture diction; as a man, the hold of Scripture truth upon the Scottish heart; as a poet, the unique inspiration which flowed from the Rock of Ages; and has, in his works, made a masterly use of all this varied knowledge. Rebecca might have been the sister of Solomon's spouse. Her prose speeches rise as to the sound of cymbals, and her "Hymn" is immortal as a psalm of David. David Deans is only a little lower than the patriarchs; and time would fail us to enumerate the passages in his better tales, which, approaching near the line of high excellence, are carried beyond it by the dextrous and sudden use of "thoughts that breathe," or "words that burn," from the Book of God. Byron, Godwin, Shelley, and Hazlitt, even, are deeply indebted to the Bible. Byron, in painting "dark bosoms," has often availed himself of the language of that book, which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Many of his finest poems are just expansions of that strong line he has borrowed from it—

"The worm that can not sleep, and never dies."

His "Hebrew Melodies" have sucked out their sweetness from the Psalms; and "Cain," his noblest production, employs against God the power it has derived from his Book. Godwin was originally a preacher, and his high didactic tone, his measured and solemn march, as well as many images and many quotations, especially in "St. Leon" and "Mandeville," show that the influence of his early studies was permanent. When Shelley was drowned, it was rumored that he had a copy of the Bible next his heart; "and," says Byron, "it would have been no wonder, for he was a great admirer of it as a composi-

tion." The rumor was not literally correct, but was so mythically. It is clear to us that Shelley was far advanced on his way to Christianity ere he died, and was learning not only to love the Bible as a composition, but to appreciate its unearthly principles—that disinterested heroism especially which characterizes Christ and his Apostles. Indeed, he was constituted rather to sympathize with certain parts of its morale, than with the simple and terse style of its writing. It was the more mysterious and imaginative portion of it which he seems principally to have admired, and which excited the rash emulation of his genius, when he projected a variation of "Job." Hazlitt's allusions to Scripture are incessant, and are to us the most interesting passages in his works. He was a clergyman's son; and in youth, the Bible had planted stings in his bosom, which none of his after-errors, in thought or life, were able to pluck out. "Heaven lay about him in his infancy," and his comparison of the Bible with Homer, and his picture of the effects of its translation into English, show that the earnest though erring man *never* altogether saw its glory

> "Die away,
> And fade into the light of common day."

This is one of the features in Hazlitt's writings which exalt them above Lord Jeffrey's. Scotchman though he was, we do not recollect one eloquent or sincere-seeming sentence from his pen about the beauties of the Bible. Such writers as Sheridan, Rogers, Alison, Dugald Stewart, Lord Erskine, William Tennant, Mrs. Hemans, and a hundred others, are suffocated in flowers; but not a word, during all his long career, from the autocrat of criticism, about Moses, Isaiah, Job, or John. To have praised their poetry, might have seemed to sanction their higher pretensions; and might, too, have reflected indirect credit upon that school of fervid poets, who were sitting at the feet of Jewish men, as well as of Cumberland mountains. Need we name, finally, Chalmers and Irving—those combinations of the prophet of the old, and the preacher of the new economy?

Our living writers have, in general, shown a sympathy with the Hebrew genius. We speak not merely of clergymen, whose verdict might by some be called interested, and whose enthusiasm might unjustly be thought put on with their cloaks. And yet we must refer to Millman's "Fall of Jerusalem," and to Croly's magnificent "Salathiel." Keble, too, and Trench, Kingsley, William Anderson, are a few out of many names of men who, while preaching the Bible doctrine, have not forgotten its literary glories, as subjects of earnest imitation and praise. But the Levites outnumber and outshine the priests in their service to the bards of the Bible. Isaac Taylor's gorgeous figures are elaborately copied from those of Scripture, although they sometimes, in comparison with them remind you of that root of which Milton speaks—

> "The leaf was darkish, and had prickles in it,
> But in another country, as he said,
> Bore a bright golden flower, but *not in this soil.*"

The Eastern spirit is in them; they want only the Eastern day. Sir James Stephen has less both of the spirit and the genuine color, ardent as his love of the Hebrews is. Macaulay quotes Scripture, as Burdett, in Parliament, was wont to quote Shakspeare—always with triumphant rhetorical effect, and seems once, at least, to have really loved its literature. Professor Wilson approaches more closely than any modern since Burke, to that wild prophetic movement of style and manner which the bards of Israel exhibit—nay, more nearly than even Burke, since with Wilson it is a perpetual afflatus: he is like the he-goat in Daniel, who came from the west, and touched not the ground; his "Tale of Expiation," for instance, is a current of fire. Thomas Carlyle concentrates a fury, enhanced by the same literary influences, into deeper, straiter, more molten and terrible torrents. Thomas Aird has caught the graver, calmer, and more epic character of the Historical Books, especially in his "Nebuchadnezzar," which none but one deep in Daniel

could have written. From another poem of his, entitled "Herodion and Azala," we quote two etchings of prophets:—

"Winged with prophetic ecstasies, behold
The son of Amos, beautifully bold,
Borne like the sythed wing of the eagle proud,
That shears the winds, and climbs the storied cloud
Aloft sublime! And through the crystaline,
Glories upon its lighted head doth shine.
* * * * * * *
Behold! behold, uplifted through the air,
The swift Ezekiel, by his lock of hair!
Near burned the Appearance, undefinedly dread,
Whose hand put forth, upraised him by the head.
Within its fierce reflection, cast abroad,
The Prophet's forehead like a furnace glowed.
From terror half, half from his vehement mind,
His lurid hair impetuous streamed behind."

From a hint or two in Scripture, he has built up his vision of hell, in the "Devil's Dream upon Mount Acksbeck," a vision mysterious, fiery, and yet distinct, definite, and fixed as a frosted minster shining in the moonlight. But in his "Demoniac," he absolutely pierces into the past world of Palestine, and brings it up with all its throbbing life and thaumaturgic energies, its earth quaking below the footsteps, and its sky darkening above the death, of the Son of God.

Of the rising poets of the day, "two will we mention dearer than the rest;" dearer, too, in part, because they have sought their inspiration at its deepest source—Bailey, of "Festus," and Yendys, of "The Roman." This is not the place to dilate on their poetic merits. We point to them now, because, in an age when so many young men and young poets are forsaking belief in the oracular and divine inspiration of the Bible, they have rallied around the old shrine, have expressed their trust in that old and blessed hope of the Gospel, and may be hailed as morning stars, prognosticating the rising of a new "day of the Lord." May their light, already brilliant and far seen, shine

"more and more," not only into its own, but into the world's "perfect day."

We have not nearly exhausted the text of this chapter, nor alluded to a tithe of the writers in this or in other lands, who have transmitted their deep impressions of Scripture poetry to others. But it may now be asked, is not all this exceedingly hopeful? What would you more? Is not the Bible now an acknowledged power? Is it not doing its work silently and effectually, through the many men of genius who are conducting its electric force? Must not its future career, therefore, be one of clear and easy triumph? So, indeed, it might at first sight appear; but there have arisen certain dark and lowering shadows in the sky, threatening to overcloud the sun-path of the Book, if not to darken it altogether; and to a calm and candid, though brief and imperfect, examination of these, we propose devoting our closing chapter.

CONCLUSION

FUTURE DESTINY OF THE BIBLE.

No theories, so far as we are aware, have been openly promulgated, or elaborately defended, upon exactly this question in the present day. But, from the mass of prevailing opinions on cognate topics, there exhale certain floating notions, which it may be perhaps of some importance to catch in language, and to try by analysis.

Let a quiet and earnest inquirer take up a copy of the Scriptures, and ask himself, "What is to be the future history of this book?" We suspect the following alternatives would come up before him:—It may, by the progress of science and philosophy, be exploded as a mass of impostures, myths, and lies; or it may, shorn of its fabulous rays, be reduced to its true level, as a revelation of spiritual truth; or it may, owing to its great antiquity, and the leaden mists which lie around its cradle, continue, as it is at present to many scholars and philosophers, a book of dubious authorship and truth, and may, perhaps, be thrown aside as a work for ages popular, but now obsolete, without any definite verdict having been passed upon its claims; or it may be fulfilled, certified, supplemented, and, in a great measure, superseded by a new and fuller revelation.

The first of those conjectures, for we freely grant that a little of the conjectural adheres to more than one of the theories, is so gloomy, and so improbable, that we must apologize for naming, and still more for seeking to refute it. The Bible a mass of myths and impostures, alternating—as though Æsop's Fables and Munchausen's Travels were bound up together in one mon-

strous medley, more monstrously pretending to be the Book of God! Myths, indeed, fables, stories, passages manifestly metaphorical, poetic hyperboles, and those of every sort, there are in Scripture; but they are all manifestly and by contrast so. The body of the book is either historical or doctrinal; and to "charge" figure upon figure in such a clumsy style, were no true heraldry. Jotham's story of the "trees" is a fable, but is Jotham himself? The parables of Jesus are truth-possessed fictions; but is Jesus, too, a figure of speech; or, at least, the mere Alexander Selkirk to the teeming brain of an ancient Defoe? No! the historic and didactic element in Scripture is a layer of light piercing through all the rest, and at once expounding and preserving the whole. Indeed, in the double form of Scripture, we see a pledge of its perpetuity. The figurative beauty above glorifies the truth, and the hard truth below solidifies the hovering splendor. And, besides, the question is irresistible—were the Bible such a wild, accidental, anomalous mixture, could it have produced such miracles of healing power, and have so long remained unanalyzed? Even granting that strange unassimilated elements have met together in it, have they not formed a whole so united, so well-cemented, that ages have conspired to own in it the hand of God? The difficulty of the compound was such, that it must have issued either in a disgraceful failure, or in a success, the wonder of the universe! Could it have been made by any other but a divine hand?

But here a second theorist steps in, and says, "I grant the book, as a whole, true. I recognize your distinction between its myths and its histories, its figures and its doctrines; but I find in it many records, pretending to be historical, and lying mixed with the histories, which I can not believe. I meet with miracles! And these seem to me such monstrous violations of the laws of nature, so opposed to general experience, bearing such a suspicious family-likeness to the portents and prodigies found in the history of all early faiths, and encumbered in their details with such difficulties, that I am compelled to deem

them fabulous, and to expect and accept an analysis which shall separate them from the real and solid principles of Christianity."

Upon this subject of miracles, let us proceed to sum up what we conceive to be the truth, in the following remarks :—

Now we grant that, firstly, miracles must be tried not only by the test of the evidence in their favor, but by the character of the system they were wrought to prove, which introduces a new element into the discussion, nay, makes it a discussion entirely new. Secondly, That, instead of miracles being the strongest evidence of Christianity, Christianity appears to us a far stronger proof of miracles: a book so divine as the Bible can not be supposed mistaken in its facts. Thirdly, That the chief things in Scripture which stagger the Christian are not likely to be the most powerful in convincing the enemy. Fourthly, That miracles seldom seem to have made converts either among those who originally witnessed them, or among those who have since heard the echo of their report. And fifthly, That miracles were wrought, not so much to convert individuals, as to decorate and magnify the system, which clothed itself even in its cradle with those awful ornaments, rung no bell save the "great bell of the universe," and used no playthings but the thunderbolts of God. But then, we ask, if miracles be false, how comes it that they are connected with what is granted to be substantially a divine revelation? Again, we maintain that the difference between the prodigies of profane history and the miracles of Jesus is immense: the latter were attested by the character of the person, the character of the faith, and the pure and benevolent purposes for which they were wrought, not to speak of the confession of some of the adversaries, and the impossibility of explaining otherwise the instant attention and impetus the faith of the Carpenter received. And, once again, we deny that miracles can be explained, as the able and Christian author of "Alton Locke" tries to do, by the operation of unknown natural causes, or resolved, with Carlyle, into "Natural Supernaturalism." For, first, this does not remove the diffi-

culty—How came Jesus to the knowledge of such occult principles—principles no philosopher has since discovered? Secondly, Is not the multiplication of bread in the miracle of the loaves and fishes very similar to the "supplying of an amputated limb?" * Is not each a creation? and who but a God can create? Knowledge of occult principles might have enabled Christ to heal obstinate diseases, but not positively to make something out of nothing! Thirdly, Does not the restoration of life to a dead and putrid body seem to run altogether counter to nature's course? for, although nature revives and restores, it is never the "same body"—she deals in transformation, not resurrection. Wherefore the raising of Lazarus seems designed as a deliberate anomaly, a grand and sovereign setting aside of a natural law, to produce a moral effect. Fourthly, Is not the exceptional aspect of miracles a proof that they were rather a temporary triumph over nature, than an evolution of some of its own inner laws? Why did miracles cease? Why did the knowledge of those occult principles *die* out of the Church? And why is the reappearance of miracles predicted always in connection with the return of the Savior from heaven, when HE shall raise the dead, and convene before him all nations, thus again, through his divine power, triumphing over the laws of nature? If such astonishing future changes had been the mere blossoming of natural principles, they had not been uniformly traced to the personal agency of Christ Jesus. Fifthly, This view of miracles, as mysterious, occasional, and fluctuating infractions of natural laws, is, we think, most in keeping with the actual history of Christ. Had his powers of working miracles sprung from his knowledge of occult principles, it had always been alike, and had been exerted in a more systematic manner, and on a broader scale. As it was, it is used with severe economy, and is preceded sometimes by ardent and yearning prayer to the Father, as if he were reluctant to interfere with the solemn and measured roll of his laws. He says, too, repeatedly, "I am come to do the *works* of my Father"—

* *This* Mr. Kingsley specially desiderates.

not to observe his laws, but to perform works as distinctly creative and divine as his fiat, "Be light, and there was light." Sixthly, This power of suspending the laws of his Father's creation—a power possessed by Christ, and bestowed, through him, on his apostles, as it had been on some of the prophets—is quite in keeping with his peculiar and abnormal character, as being the strangest and sublimest birth in the universe, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and yet the offspring of the miraculous conception, and the Son of the Blessed—who is still a glorious anomaly in heaven as he was on earth—and with the wondrous and solitary work which was given him to do. We never see in him the philosopher working his way to his result, upon natural principles—but the Son walking in his Father's house, and having "authority" to issue what commandments, to diseases or demons, to waves or winds, to life or death, it pleased him.

But why, Alton Locke will ask again, should the laws of nature ever require suspension? When once satisfied of the fact, many reasons occur to account for it. One may be, to show that these laws are not eternal and unchangeable, and that it is thus impossible to confound them with their author—for what is not eternal and unchangeable can not be God. Miracles confute Pantheism. All can not be God, since here is something which is not, in the Pantheist's sense, God, and yet has *been*. Miracles prove the dependence of matter upon God, who in an instant can repeal his most steadfast laws. Miracles evince the power of spirit over matter. What can show us this in a more striking light, than the sight of Jesus rebuking the thousand brute waves of the Galilean lake? Miracles prove God's boundless love to the family of man; for it was for his sake that such a power was intrusted to his Son. Miracles represent God as possessing a liberty to act, if we may use the expression, in different styles at different times—now in that of regular and unvaried sequence, and again in sudden and mystic change. A hundred other reasons of a similar nature might be adduced.

Have these miracles, then, been wrought? Devoutly do we

believe that they have; but we are not at all sanguine of their power as an argument with the infidel. Till he has learned to appreciate the moral and spiritual aspects of the religion of Jesus, he will continue, we fear, to stumble at that old stumbling-stone. But if he persist in his insolent assertion, that the miraculous part of Christianity shall soon be shorn away as fabulous, we must answer, "Thou fool, who art thou that repliest against God. He that wrought miracles in the past, is able to work more, and mightier, in the future; and beware thou lest they be miracles of judgment. The Savior who came last in swaddling-bands, is again to be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Suppose that the credit of the supernatural portion of the Bible were to fall, what would be the general results? First, Those who base their belief in Scripture on its miracles, would rush into skepticism. Secondly, Those who did not, would yet be surrounded by peculiar and formidable difficulties—by such questions as, why has God produced such deep and general effects by a tissue of falsehoods? and why has he connected that tissue so closely with a web of truth? must not the truth, power, and beauty so misplaced, be human instead of divine? Yes, the Book would instantly be degraded, if not destroyed—discrowned, if not banished. The strange mantle it had worn, with all those starry and mysterious ornaments, would fall from it; it could scarcely be recognized as the same; and, if ceasing to be a "Prince," would it remain a "Savior?"

Others—probably, however, a small class—may be inclined to support a third theory: this, namely, that we never can satisfy ourselves now, more than we have done, as to the claims of the Bible—that the question is a moot and insoluble point, like those of the "Iron Mask," the guilt of Queen Mary, and the authorship of "Junius"—that it is a question which is likely to decline in interest, as man becomes more advanced in culture—and that by and by it may be dropped silently out of mind, like the controversies of the schoolmen, without having attained any

definite or absolute resolution. But it is surely not probable that God would allow a question involving such vast and vital interests to remain unsettled, or to pass into the dim limbo of unresolved and half-forgotten logomachies. Hitherto, the result of all new discoveries has been to dart new notice, new light, new interest, upon the pages of this marvelous book, which, like the full moon, shines undimmed, whatever stars come up the midnight. (In her majestic simplicity, SHE fears no rival among all those new telescopic orbs, which are arriving every hour, and can suffer no eclipse from them; and neither need the Bible, in its pure, and mild, and crystal sphere, be alarmed at all the starry revelations of science.) Nor will man allow this question to sink into obscurity, or to be buried in everlasting indifference. Nay, he seems even now to be girding himself for a more minute, earnest, and persevering inquiry into the claims of the Book. To solve this problem, many of the noblest of the race have sat down, like Archimedes, gluing themselves to the task, determined to conquer or to die. This mighty and awful shade, like the "dead majesty of buried Denmark," such bold watchers must at all hazards bespeak, to ascertain its actual nature, and to gather real tidings; this thing, so majestical, they must cross, though it blast them. The Bible forgotten! There never was an age when there was less danger of that. It is not merely that its unequaled literary power secures its vitality, but over that, as a professed revelation from God, there has begun a keen, hotly-contested fight, closing every day into deadlier earnestness, and which, at no very distant period, promises to be finally decided.

Such is the threefold skeptical expectation. It is, in all its phases, melancholy, and tends to teach nothing but an evangel of despair. Should the Bible sink, what remains? Where are we to find a substitute for it? What manual of duty so broad and practical? What narrative so broad, humane, and melting? What book of genius so full of the pith and lustihood of primeval manhood? Where another such two-edged sword, baring, on the one side, the bosom of God, and, on the other, the heart

of man? Where a book with such a Gospel? Where another such combination of truth so humble, power so meek, virtue so merciful, poetry so holy, beauty so condescending, celestial wisdom so affable? A book of which all this is true found a cheat—an old wives' fable—swarming with lies, or saved only from the charge, under the plea of the dotage of age! Alas! alas! And suppose a substitute found—suppose, by some conjunction of mental forces, extraordinary as that of material, which is said to have produced the deluge, another book written, equally wide, and equally intense, equally sublime and equally useful, equally profound and equally plain—which should mete the ocean of this troubled age in its span, and weigh its great mountains and its small dust of doubts and difficulties alike in its balance, and be hailed by exulting millions as divine—where the security for its permanent power? who should dare to say that it, too, might not outlive itself—wax old, and vanish away, after enduring the pains and penalties, the contempt and insults, which track dishonored age to the dust, and cause it to cry to the rocks of neglect and to the mountains of obscurity to cover it? Then, too, might the Bible say to it—"Art thou also become weak as I? I, too, once caused my terror in the land of the living, and was even believed to stretch my scepter over the shadowy mansions of the dead."

As never book so commanded, roused, affrighted, gladdened, beautified, and solemnized the world, so the horrors of its fall are too frightful almost for conception. We were borne away in vision to see this great sight—in vision only, thank God! ever to be seen. We saw this new plague of darkness passing over the world. As it passed, there was heard the shriek of children, mourning for their New Testaments, and refusing to be comforted because they were not. There arose next, the wail of women: of mothers, whose hope for their dead babes was put out; of wives, whose desire for the salvation of their husbands was cruelly quenched; of aged matrons, whose last comfort, as they trembled on the verge of eternity, was extinguished. Then

came a voice, saying, "Philanthropists, abandon your plans of universal amelioration, for the glad tidings to all people have died away! Preachers of the word, pause on your pulpit stairs: your message is a lie! Poets, cut your gorgeous dreams of a Millennium in sunder: they are but dreams, and the dream-book is dead! Missionaries, throw down your sickles: the 'end of the world' ye may see, its 'harvest' never! Poor Negroes, Caffrarians, and Hindoos, look no more upward to those teachers, once deemed to drop down honey and milk on your parched lips: they are the retailers of exploded fables! Millenarians—ye who hoped that the world was soon to be touched by the golden spur of Jesus, and to spring onward to a glorious goal—'why stand ye gazing up into heaven?' Heaven there is none, and no Savior is preparing to descend! Bearers of that corpse to the grave, cast it down, and flee; for he that fell asleep in Jesus fell asleep in a lie, and if ye sow in hope, ye are liars, too! Poor prisoner in the cause of humanity—poor slave, turn not your red and swollen eyes to heaven, for on the side of your oppressors there is power, and ye have no helper! Stop your prayers, ye praying ones, for the Great Ear is shut—nay, it was never open! Dying sinner, clench thy teeth in silence: hope not, for there is no pardon; fear not, for there is no punishment! But, while prayer, and praise, and the cheerful notes of Christian and hopeful toil—the voice of the Bridegroom rejoicing over his bride, united by the sacred tie of Christian marriage—and the voice of the Christian mother, bending and singing over the cradled features, where she reads immortality—and all melodies which have wedded Christian hope to poetry and music, should be forever dumb, let the maniac howl on, and the swearer curse, and the atheist laugh, and the vile person sneer and gibber, and the hell-broth of war bubble over in blood, and the sound of the scourge become eternal as the growth of the cane; and if mirth there be, let it be expressed in one wild and universal dance between a grave forever closed below, and a heaven forever empty, and shut, and silent, above!"—All this we saw and

heard, and, starting from a slumber more hideous than death, found our Bible in our bosom, and behold it was but a dream!

"Again in our dream, and the vision was new." We stood in the midst of a great plain, or table-land, with dim, shadowy mountains far, far behind and around, and a black, midnight, moonless sky above. A motley multitude was met, filling the whole plain; and a wild, stern hum, as of men assembled for some dark one purpose, told us that they were assembled to witness, or to assist at, a SACRIFICE. In the midst of the plain, there towered a huge altar, on which crackled and smoked a blaze, blue, livid, and the spires of which seemed eyes, eager and hungrily waiting for their victim and prey. Around, "many glittering faces" were looking on. They were the faces of the priests, who appeared all men of gigantic stature. Their aspects otherwise were various. Some seemed, like the flames, restlessly eager; others seemed timid, were ghastly pale, and looked ever and anon around and above; and in the eyes of one or two there stood unshed tears. Above them, in the smoke, dipping at times their wings in the surge of the fire, and frequently whispering in the ears of the priests, we noticed certain dark and winged figures, the purpose in whose eyes made them shine more fiercely far than the flames, and sparkle like the jewelry of hell. On the altar there was as yet no victim. All this we saw as clearly as if noon had been resting on the plain, for all, though dark, shone like the glossy blackness of the raven's wing. We asked in our astonishment, at one standing beside us, "What meaneth all this? What sacrifice is this? Who are these priests?" And he replied, "Know you not this? These priests are the leaders of the new philosophy—the successors of those who, in the nineteenth century, sapped the belief of the nations in the Bible. They have met to burn the Bible, and to renew society through its ashes." "And is all the multitude of this mind?" "The majority are; but a few are so weak as to believe that the book will be snatched by a supernatural hand from the burning; and it is said that even two or three of the priests share at times in the foolish delu-

sion: but I laugh at it." "But who are those winged figures?" "Winged figures," he replied; "I see them not." And he looked again. "Yes," we said, "with those plumes of darkness and eyes of fire." His countenance fell; he stared, trembled, and was silent. It appeared that the multitude saw not *them*.

The hum of the vast congregation meanwhile increased, like that of many waves nearing the shore. At last, voices were heard crying, "It is time: forth with the old imposture." And it was brought forth, and one of the priests, a gray-haired man, took it into his hands. "Who is this?" we asked. "He was once," said our neighbor, "a believer in the Bible, and has been chosen, therefore, to cast it into the flames, and to pronounce a curse over it ere it is cast." Words would fail us to describe the multitude when the Book appeared. Some shouted with savage joy, others muttered "curses, not loud, but deep." One cried, "It maddened my mother." Another, "It made my sister drown herself." A third, "It has cost me many a night of agony." Some we saw weeping, and wiping away their tears, lest they should be seen; and other some looking up with the protest of indignation and appeal to Heaven. One face we noticed—that of a youth; and there was a poet's fire in his eye, who seemed about to speak in the Book's behalf, when one beside put his hand to his lips and held him back from his purpose, like a hound by the leash. And methought we heard, half-stifled in the distance, from a remote part of the assembly, a deep hollow voice, saying "Beware!"

The priest approached the altar, held the volume over the flames, and uttered the curse. What it was, we heard not distinctly, for each word was lost in loud volleys of applause, which the priests began, and the vast multitude repeated. But as he held it in his grasp, and was uttering his slow maledictions over it, we saw the Book becoming radiant with a strange luster, brightening at every word, as if it were uttering a silent protest, and giving the lie in light to the syllables of insult. And when he ceased, there was silence; and he is about to drop the Book into the burning, when a voice is heard saying, not now, in a

whisper, but as in ten thunders—"Beware!" and, turning round, we saw, speeding from the mountain boundary of the plain, the figure of a man—his eyes shining like the sun—his hair streaming behind him—his right hand stretched out before. And as the multitude open, by their trembling and falling to the ground, a thousand ways before him; and as the old priest stiffens into stone, and holds the Book as a statue might hold it; and as the priests around sink over the altar into the flames, and the winged figures fly, he approaches, ascends, takes the Book, and, looking up to heaven and around to earth, exclaims—"The Word of the Lord, the Word of the Lord endureth forever!" And lo! the altar seemed to shape itself into a throne, and the man sat upon it, and "the judgment was set, and the books opened." And again we awoke, and behold it was, and *yet was not*, a dream.

No; for we think that we have thus expressed, in outline and allegory, a great reality. That the Bible is to go down, we believe as impossible as it were shocking; but that there is a deep danger before it, a partial eclipse awaiting it, a "rock ahead," we are firmly persuaded. Nay, we are satisfied that the dangers are so numerous and varied, that no pilot but one can rescue it, and in it, us, the church, the world!

The spread of skepticism is the most obvious of these dangers. That in past ages seemed to stagnate, unless when it was fanned by the breath of political excitement, or forced on by the influence of some powerful genius, or unless its waters were strengthened by the foul tributary flood of licentiousness. Now it is more of an age tendency—a world-wide calm and steady current—a tide advancing upon young and old, wise and foolish, vicious and moral, cold and hot, male and female, half-informed and learned, high and low. Skepticism has been found of late in strange places, even in the sanctuary of God. In proof of this, we have but to name Foster and Arnold, men of great, though unequal name, of ardent, religious feelings, representing thousands, and who both died, torn and bleeding, in the breakers of doubt. The effects of this abounding and overflowing stream

of tendency are most pernicious. It has made the rash and inconsiderate abandon churches, and openly avow their unbelief; it has driven one species of the timid into the arms of implicit faith, and another into a shallow and transparent hypocrisy; while, meantime, the bigotry of some is hardening, and their narrowness closing up every day; while others are, from various causes, "detained before the Lord;" and while a large class are striving to forget their doubts, amid the clatter of mechanical activities and the roar of the applauses by which the report of these is in public religious meetings always received. But on still the *dark tide is flowing*, and alas! gaining ground. One is reminded of a splendid drawing-room, in a room adjoining to which a secret murder has been newly committed. Brilliant is the scene, gay the lights, beautiful the countenances, soft the music—a wall of mirrors is reflecting the various joy; but below the feet of the company there is slowly stealing along the silent blood, biding its time, and too secure of producing, to hasten, the terrible effects of its discovery.

But how to meet and counteract this wide current? Some say—*laissez faire*—it is good for us, quietly, to wait; there was a similar tide in the days of the French Revolution—it passed away, and the old landmarks were again seen, the stronger and dearer for the danger. And so it may be again. But there are important differences. That was, to a great extent, a political movement. It involved, too, more of a licentious spirit; it was a revolt against the ten commandments; it was supported, in a great measure, by practical Antinomians. The movement, now, is quieter, deeper—altogether irrespective of politics, and partly of morals. And though we were willing to *let it* alone, it will not *let us*. Its consequences, in the language of Burke, are "about us, they are upon us, they shake public security, they menace private enjoyment. When we travel, they stop our way. They infest us in town, they pursue us to the country." No; whether we can stop this current or not, it is vain to wait till it pass—vainer to seek to let it alone.

Efforts indeed to check it are numerous, in the form of lectures and essays on the Evidences; and of them we may say, *valeant quantum valere.* They browbeat insolent and shallow skepticism—they check the progress of *individuals* on their erroneous way—they at least add to the smoke of the right side of the field, if not to its effectual defense or raking fire. But our hopes of all or any of them, including our own efforts in this volume, are, so far as general effect upon the skeptical mind is concerned, not very sanguine. The old Adam, the natural infidel tendency of the heart, strengthened at present by the contagion of that vast religious corpse, the Continent—by the perplexed state of the critical and metaphysical questions connected with the Evidences—by the dominance of fashion, a false power, but waxing greater every day—and by the influence of a large portion of the press, is becoming too strong for our Melancthons, young or old; who, besides, do but too manifestly evince that their own hearts are failing them for fear of those things which are coming upon the world. Books, accordingly, are loosened, each after each (like the horses from a Russian sledge pursued by the wolves), in sacrifice to the destroyers, who swallow all greedily, pause a moment, and then resume their pursuit and hungry howl.

Associations, too, have been formed from which much good was expected. We have no desire to dwell on the faults, or to record the failure, of such alliances. They resemble rather an imperfect census of population, than a great conscription of active force. If in aught successful, they have been so rather in showing a sense of the danger and disease, than in providing the remedy. Earnest and good are their leaders and many of the followers; but they have excluded many who are better still—they have turned catholicism into a party thing; instead of generalizing the particular, they have particularized the general, and their partial success has been altogether in keeping with their partial and poor idea.

We have heard another plan suggested (indeed, we have the credit or discredit of it ourselves), that a meeting or committee

should be called, not to stereotype and circulate the points in which all *average* Christians agree, but to consider, first, the general question of the Christian Evidences; and, secondly, the points on which Christians differ. Dr. Johnson roared and stamped, a century ago, in behalf of another "Convocation of the Church of England;" would God, we once thought, that a selection of the wise of all denominations could be trusted to meet now in an œcumenical council, with no dictator but the invisible spirit of Jesus, to settle the many quick, subtile, and formidable questions which are at present stumbling their thousands, and imbittering their millions! Such an idea, however, we resign, because, first, the name "Utopian" is prepared to measure the plan already; because, again, we know well how *multiplied* wisdom often becomes *singular* folly, convocated liberality the worst of bigotry—how a thousand in council will decree at night what every individual among them shall be ashamed of on the morrow—how fatal to human progress and the cause of Christian truth, have been the results, in written shape, of such meetings already; and because, once again, the decision of this supposed court, however "frequent and full," however well selected and well managed, could never in this age exert so much authority as a "Thus saith the Lord," proceeding from a single accredited messenger or prophet from heaven.

Others continue to trust implicitly in old forms of faith and old shapes of agency, provided the first be made still more stringently orthodox, and the second be intensified in energy and zeal. But, alas! these agents are carrying now their *shadows* along with them to their work, and are finding that those they visit have theirs too! They are bringing darkness to darkness; or, too often, they gain a partial and mean triumph by dogmatizing down, instead of meeting fairly and kindly, the doubts they hear from the more intelligent of the poor, or the heathens. And while they are, by fair or by foul methods, breaking in upon the ignorant or brutified gloom of the masses at home or abroad, behind, with sure, noiseless footstep, the *illuminated darkness* of this twilight age is following in their

track, shadowing their own souls, and by and by threatening to engulf those of their converts too.

Our agencies are doing a good work, and ought to be encouraged; our creeds are exerting still a powerful influence, and should not lightly be tampered with. But there is an unbelief abroad which our agencies can not reach, and there is also a faith abroad which our creeds can not consolidate or contain. The assault our churches and our creeds are at present sustaining, is partly of light and partly of darkness; and hence the strange peculiarity and difficulty of the Christian's position. "The morning cometh, and also the night." Light is dawning in the East, but is it dawning at such an angle as to reach the valley of vision where he stands, or only to show how dark and dim that valley is? That question he can not fully answer, and must wait patiently till another do.

Our agencies are excellent, but imperfect; our creeds excellent, but with something wrong in all of them. And till these imperfections be remedied, we calmly, yet fearlessly, expect the following phenomena—an increasing indifference to forms of faith; a yearly increase of deserters from churches and public worship; the increase, too, among a class, of a fashionable, formal, and heartless devotion; the spread, on the one hand, of Popery and superstition, and of fanaticism and bigotry on the other, which shall each react into doubt by its very violence; the increase of determination and unity among philosophical skeptics; continued and fierce assaults on the bulwarks of the Bible from without—feebler and feebler resistance from within; a growing impatience and fury on the subject in the general mind; all the signs, in short, that the Book, as a religious authority, is tottering like an old crown, and must be supported from within or without, from around or from *above*.

It is the very tale of the Jewish Temple, before the Advent of Christ. It had fallen into comparative contempt; it was under an enemy's hand; it was not only forsaken of many men, but God's fire was burning low upon the altar, and not a few voices were heard saying, "Raze, raze it to the foundation."

Its young worshipers seem very generally to have forsaken it. Still Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary—in other words, the old disciples—and the middle class of men and of women, were to be found faithfully worshiping—and Zacharias and Elisabeth were diligently ministering there. They still believed at once in its former divine consecration, its present connection with heaven, and its future glory. And two events by and by convinced the land and the world that their belief had been sound.

The first of these was the rise of the Baptist. He came in haste, to announce the approach of the mightier than he. He roused the whole land by his startling words. And, "while he was yet speaking," the Master appeared. But have the words, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," been exhausted by his coming? Was the day he introduced a "dreadful day?" Must there not be a reference in the prophecy to events still future? We, for our parts, expect the Master to be again preceded by a forerunner. We have already seen (in "Paul") the *qualifications* that forerunner must possess. His *work*, like the Baptist's, may be partly conservative and partly destructive. "Down with all that oppresses the genuine spirit of Christianity, and impedes its free motions," shall be one of his cries. But "Hold to the Book with a death's grasp, till the Master come to explain, supplement, glorify it anew," shall be another. And a third and loudest shall be, "He is behind me; the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The full amount of impression such cries may produce we can not tell. Rouse many they must; check many they may; fan the flame of hope in the hearts of many drooping believers they will. But they will not, nor are meant to stop the progress of the "mist of darkness," gathering on to that gloomiest hour which is to precede the dawning of the great day—an hour in which the Word of God may seem a waning moon, trembling on extinction, and in which every Christian heart shall be trembling too. "There shall be signs in the sun, and

in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, *with perplexity;* the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them *for fear*, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And *then* shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory."

'Tis a remarkable saying which follows, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." It is as if the Savior anticipated the crisis which was before his "words." They are in danger of passing away—nay, they are passing away—when he comes down and says, "No, heaven and earth must pass away *first*, must pass away instead;" and they are straightway changed, and his waning words catch new light and fire from his face, and shine more brightly than before. It is as it were a struggle between his works and his words, in which the latter are victorious.

We are fast approaching the position of the Grecians on the plains of Troy. Our enemies are pressing us hard on the field, or from the Ida of the ideal philosophy throwing out incessant volleys. There are disunion, distrust, disaffection among ourselves. Our standard still floats intact, but our standard-bearers are fainting. Meanwhile our Achilles is retired from us. But just as when the Grecian distress deepened to its darkest, when Patroclus the "forerunner" had fallen, when men and gods had driven them to the very verge of the sea, Achilles knew his time was come, started up, sent before him his terrible voice, and his more terrible eye, and turned straightway the tide of battle; so do we expect that our increasing dangers and multiplying foes, that the thousand-fold night that seems rushing upon us, is a token that aid is coming, and that *our* Achilles shall "no more be silent, but speak out," shall lift his

"Bow, his thunder, his almighty arms"—

'shall take unto him his great power and reign." And even as Cromwell, when he saw the sun rising through the mist on the

field of Dunbar, with the instinct of genius, caught the moment, pointed to it with his sword, and cried, "Arise, O God, and let thine enemies be scattered," and led his men to victory, let us accept the same omen, and breathe the same prayer.

Nor does it derogate from the Bible to say, that it must receive aid from on high to enable it to "stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." It has nobly discharged its work; it has kept its post, and will, though with difficulty, keep it, till the great reserve, long promised and always expected, shall arrive. It was no derogation to the old economy to say, that it yielded to the "New Shekinah"—it had accomplished its task in keeping the fire burning, although burning low, till the day-spring appeared; nor is it a derogation to the New Testament to say, that it has carried, like a torch in the wind, a hope, two thousand years old, till it now seems about to be lost in the light of a brighter dispensation.

And while the hope is to be lost in its fruition, what shall be the fate of the volume which so long sustained it? What *has* been the fate of the Old Testament? Has it not retained its reverence and power? Is it not every day increasing in clearness? Has not the New Testament reflected much of its own radiance upon it? Do they not lie lovingly and side by side in the same volume? And why should not the New Book of the Laws and Revelations of the Prince of the Kings of the earth (if such a book there were) form a third, and complete the "threefold chord which is not easily broken?" And would not both the New and the Old Testament derive glorious illustration from the influences and illuminations of the Millennial Day? *

* To these views of the probable personal Advent of Christ, objections may be anticipated. It may be said, for instance, "Do you not in one place of the chapter lay little stress upon miracles; and in another expect every thing from a future miraculous interference?" But what have we said, after all, save that the miracles recorded in the New Testament have not converted the world? But why should not other miracles, if conducted upon a grander scale, and accompanied

But the "scene is mingling with the heavens." Pisgah is past. Mount Zion itself is appearing. The city of God is bursting into view. But who shall describe that sight? Prophets have seen the skirts of its glory, and fallen down as dead men. The changes and birth-pangs which shall usher in these new heavens and that new earth, we can not even conjecture; of the nature of that new theocracy, we have but dim conceptions; and our words being necessarily faint, must be few. Suffice it, that it shall be a just government. It shall judge "righteous judgment." It shall judge, no longer by the outward appearance, but by the heart. It shall be a government of souls, as well as of bodies. It shall be a government of commanding mildness—overbearing love. It shall be a government securing for the first time perfect liberty, brotherhood, and equality to the nations. It shall be the first government that ever united all interests in its care, and made all men equally happy under its dominion. It shall unite the race into

with Christ's personal presence, effect a stupendous change upon it? The raising of Lazarus did not move the obstinacy of the Jews; but surely the raising or changing of all men would convince all men of the reality of the Savior's power. What doubt but must expire in the blaze of judgment? Surely there is a difference between miracles wrought during a state of probation, and miracles wrought to bring that state of probation to a close. It would seem, too, that *punitive* purposes are more contemplated in the miracles of the last dispensation, than those of conversion. "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his work." We can retort, too, upon our opponents, by saying, "You admit that the agency of the Spirit has not accomplished the work of converting the world, and yet you expect that event from a different measure of the same agency."

It may be said next, "But might not the Spirit perform all the work?" We answer, undoubtedly; but, first, if a Pentecostal revival take place, it will, in all probability, like that of old, be accompanied with miracles, and why not with the additional marvel of the Son's appearance; especially as, secondly, we find the promise of his coming so frequently connected in Scripture with the destruction of his enemies, and the advancement of his Church. If no Pentecostal revival be sent—if the Church is to proceed at its present creeping and crippled

one band of laborers, to develop the riches and beautify the surface of the planet. It shall unite the churches into one great throng of worshipers, "with one Lord, one faith, and one baptism."

How beautiful, then, shall seem, renewed and glorified, this "great globe, the world!" The promises of ten thousand days of loveliness in the past, of innumerable mornings and evenings, or nights trembling all over with starry pulses of glory, shall be realized in the permanent aspects of earth and of sky. The prophecies of all genuine poets, since the world began, shall have a living fulfillment in the general countenance, and character, and heart of man. Nor shall the spirit of progress and aspiring change be extinct. To meet the new discoveries below, and the new stars and constellations flashing down always from the Infinite above, or drawing nearer and becoming brighter in the mystic dances of the heavens, men's minds must arise in sympathy and brighten in unison. Who shall picture what the state of society, and what the progress of hu-

rate—when, we ask, is its Millennium to dawn? *Shall it ever?* No alternative can we see, but Jesus advenient, and prayer and work done in this prospect, or despair.

We have in the text anticipated objections which might be urged to our belief in a "Forerunner." Such a being would answer the same end with the Baptist. He would encourage the friends and check the foes, till the hour for the Divine Man should strike. He might, in some measure, prepare the Church, if not the world, for the Advent, although both, in some measure, it shall, according to Scripture, take by surprise.

But to defend this ancient "hope" of the church is not our special purpose. We recommend those who are ignorant alike of its grounds and its grandeur, to read Edward Irving's Preface to "Ben Ezra," a production little known, but in power, simplicity, and dignity, not equaled since the apostles fell asleep, or equaled by the Areopagitica of Milton alone. And when shall George Croly, or William Anderson, write a great apology for this "hope that is in them," in a style which shall at once rebuke sciolists, convince inquirers, and blow a blast of mingled music and thunder to a sleeping Church and a gainsaying world?

man souls, at that astronomical era, when the Cross shall shine in *our* southern heaven, and the Lyre shall include our Polar star amid its burning strings? Must there not then break forth from our orb a voice of song, holier than Amphion's, sweeter than all Orphean measures, comparable to that fabled melody by which the spheres were said to attune their motions; comparable, say, rather, to that nobler song wherewith, when earth, a stranger, first appeared in the sky, she was saluted, by the "Morning stars singing together, and all the sons of God shouting for joy."

Changes more stupendous still may follow. These skies may be entirely dissolved. This earth, notwithstanding all her wondrous history, may be removed like a cottage. The whole universe may be thrown into a new mold, or be used as mere scaffolding to some ulterior building of yet grander purpose, and more spiritual symmetry and beauty. The sun may "sleep on in his clouds, careless of the voice of the morning." The red eye of Sirius may shut upon his old battle-field. The Wolf may no more—

"With looks of lightning, watch the Centaur's spear."

Orion may no longer pass in slow and martial pomp as a sentinel through the midnight heavens. The Milky Way may have shut its two awful arms, and ceased its dumb prayer. But let not the heart of the Christian tremble. His safety is independent of all materialism. His Savior "made," and shall survive the "worlds." His soul, too, bears on it the stamp of absolute immortality. His earth may sink under his feet; but the Pilot of the Galilean lake shall be there, and shall save the crew of the dear vessel. His skies may wither; but there is a spiritual firmament forever o'er his head, which shall get brighter every moment. His Bible may not be found in his hands; but its truths shall be engraven on his heart, its pictures shall be written on his imagination, and the memory of its old powers and glories shall never decay. And what though

star-spangled vail after vail of matter fall, if, by the downfall of each, he be brought nearer and nearer to the Great Spirit; and what though he leave room after room of splendor behind him on his rapid way, if he be approaching always—though never absolutely to reach—that "secret place of thundering," that "holiest of all," where dwells the always Old, the always Young, the All-Wise and the Ever-Silent, the Inscrutable and Eternal One.

Here we draw down the curtain, and drop the theme. If we have, in the volume now concluded, taught one man to love the Bible more, or one to hate it less—if we have stumbled but one on his dreary way to the wrong side of the great Armageddon valley, or have cheered but one spirit that was trembling for the ark of God—if we have shot but one new pang of the feeling of the Bible's surpassing truth and beauty, across the minds of the literary public, or expressed but a tithe of our own youth-implanted and deep-cherished convictions and emotions on the surpassing theme, then this volume, with all its deficiencies, has not been written in vain.

The spirit of the whole production seems to demand it to close in the words of a poet's invocation:—

"Come, then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the best,
Thou who alone art worthy! It was thine
By ancient covenant, ere nature's birth,
And thou hast made it thine by purchase too,
And overpaid its value by thy blood.
Thy saints proclaim thee king, and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen,
Dipped in the fountains of eternal love.
Thy saints proclaim thee King, and thy delay
Gives courage to thy foes, who, could they see
The dawn of thy last Advent, long desired,
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
And flee for safety to the falling rocks.
The very spirit of the world is 'ired

Of its own taunting question asked so long,
'Where is the promise of your Lord's approach?'
* * * * * *
Come, then, and added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to thy last and most effectual work,
Thy work fulfilled, the conquest of a world"

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

THE POETICAL CHARACTERS IN SCRIPTURE.

Beside the authors and poets of the Old and New Testaments, there are, in the course of both, a number of characters depicted, teeming with peculiar and romantic interest, and who are abundantly entitled to the epithet poetical. It were unpardonable, in a book professing to include a summary of all the poetical elements of the Book of God, to omit a rapid survey of these, neither mute nor inglorious, although no songs have they sung, nor treatises of truth recorded, but who, "being dead, yet speak," in the eloquence, passion, devotion, or peculiarity and wickedness, of their histories. We are, therefore, tempted to annex the following chapter, as an appendix to the volume.

First among these, stands Adam himself. How interesting the circumstances of his formation! Mark with what dignity God accompanied the making of man. Behold the whole Trinity consulting together ere they proceeded to this last and greatest work of the Demiurgic days. God had only said—"Let there be light, let there be a firmament, let the waters be gathered together, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind;" but, when man was to be taken out of the clay, the style of Deity rises, if we may so speak, above itself, and he says—"Let us make man after our own likeness."

We may imagine ourselves present at this thrilling moment. A mist is watering the face of the ground, and partially bedimming the sun. Slowly, yet mysteriously, is the red clay drawn out of the ground, fashioned, and compacted into the shape of man, till the future master of the world is, as to his

bodily part, complete, and lies, statue-like and still, upon the dewey ground. But speedily, like a gentle breeze, the breath of the Lord passes over his face, and he becomes a living soul, and his eyes open upon the green glad earth, and the orb of day shining through a golden mist, and his ears open to the melodies, which seem to salute him as Lord of all, and he starts to his feet, and stretches out his hands to the sun as if to embrace it, and the mists disperse, and the beams of noon show him Eden shining in all its beauty—the abode of man, and the garden of God. His emotions can no more be conceived than described. The infant is introduced step by step into the sight of the great temple of the creation. But it must have burst in all but an instant upon the view of the man-boy, Adam. His happiness, however, was not yet complete: he was still alone. And he could not be long in the world till he desired a companion. The sun he could *not* grasp; the moon, walking in her brightness, he could not detain; the trees cooled his brow, but yielded no sympathy to his heart. His own shadow was but a cold and coy companion. And, probably, while full of cravings after society, which mingled with and damped his new-born raptures of joy, he felt creeping over him the soft influences of slumber. He slept. There was sleep in Eden: perhaps there may be sleep in heaven! Man was scarcely created till he slept; and, while asleep, "God took one of his ribs, and made of it a woman," not of rude clay, but of the finished portion of a finished man, forming her from a finer material, and clothing her with a more fascinating loveliness. "He brought her to the man," as a companion to his joys, for sorrows as yet he had none, to talk with him in Eden, in the large sweet utterance of a tongue tuned and taught by God himself, to wander with him by the rivers of paradise, to be united to him by a tie of tender and indissoluble affection. With joy he welcomed her as the breathing essence—the perfumed marrow of his own being—"bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh;" and surely we may believe that the harps of angels, as well as the glad sounds of nature, celebrated the happy union.

This fair and noble product was made in "God's image"—understanding not by this, as some suppose, his erect bodily form—a form possessed by apes as well as by men—but a similitude of mental and moral character, mingled together in large and equal proportions. We deny not, indeed, that this may have expressed itself in the outward lineaments of our first parents, nor will call those mere enthusiasts who may tell us that Adam was fairer far than any of his sons, and Eve, than any of her daughters; nay, that the sun is not more glorious than the face of the first man, nor the rising moon of evening more beautiful than that of the first woman. But the glory was chiefly mental and moral. Adam bore a mental resemblance to his Maker. He had an ample intellect, a rich imagination, united together by a link of burning soul, as superior to that of Milton, who sang him in strains which shall never die, as that to the trodden worm. But he had not only a high, but a holy spirit—a conscience the most undefiled—a sense of duty electrically quick—affections sunning themselves in God—and a love pure, and bright, and constant as the lamps which, while shining in the divine presence, owe their radiance to the divine eye. Eve, in a more soft and shadowy light, reflected the ardent splendors of his character. Alas! that two such children should ever have erred, and that a crown so beautiful and so delicately woven, should have dropped from their heads!

Drop, however, it did. That first hour of the world's prime was as short as it was beautiful. Eden is gone, and gone forever. It was but a spot in a dark earth, after all, supernaturally gilded, and its very wreck remains not. No more do its bowers shower "roses on the first lovers;" no more do its streams murmur music in their ears; no more are the shadows of mailed angels reflected in the four rivers; no more is the voice of God heard in our groves, or in our gardens, in the cool of the day. But let the prospects of the future cheer us in the memory of the sorrows of the past. Let the breezes soon to begin to blow upon us from the land of Millennial rest—or, at all events, let the prospects of an eternal heaven, of a paradise in the skies,

of a sun to which that of Eden was darkness, of rivers to which those of Eden were shallow and dumb, of groves to which those of Eden had no beauty and no music—console us for all that Adam had, and for all that Adam lost.

Adam, in Genesis, is entirely, and, from the shortness of the history, necessarily, a representative person. He has no peculiarities of character, apart from his federal connection with the race. He seems but an outline, far and faint, which every imagination is left to fill up; and thus, when he falls, we mourn not at all for him, nor for Eve, but for the general happiness lost, and the general gulf of woe and wickedness opened. And it is one of Milton's greatest triumphs, that he has invested Adam and Eve with such an individual interest, that, at the tidings of their ruin, we grieve for them as for dear friends, and feel sadder for Eve's flowers than for the whole federal catastrophe.

Of Cain, Adam's eldest son, too, we can hardly judge accurately or distinctly, apart from the many poetic shapes which, since the account of Moses, he has assumed, yet our idea of him may be uttered. Born amid great expectations, called by his mother "the man, the Lord," he grew up, disappointing every fond hope, and becoming a somewhat sullen drudge, "a tiller of the ground." Meanwhile, his younger brother is exhibiting the finer traits of the pastoral character. The "elder is made to serve the younger." Fiercely does the once-spoiled child kick against the pricks, till at last the fury of conscious inferiority breaks out in blood—the blood of Abel. Conscience-struck, hearing in every wind the voice of his brother's gore—nay, carrying it in his ear, as the shell carries inland the sound of ocean's waters—he flees from his native region, and a curse clings to him, and the whole story seems to prove—first, the evil of over-excited and disappointed hopes; secondly, the misery of the murderer; and thirdly, how God can deduce good from evil, and mingle mercy with judgment. Abel's blood probably promoted the separation of two races who had been too long mingled– the race of those who worshiped, and that

of those who hated God; and God was pleased, no doubt significantly, to let the *first* shedder of man's blood escape.

Poets have done with Cain as it seemed good in their own eyes. Gessner's "Death of Abel" is a somewhat mawkish, though rather elegant production, full of the first froth of that German genius, which seems now, so far as poetry is concerned, in its lees. Coleridge has given us a noble fragment, the "Wanderings of Cain"—the sweetest and most Scriptural of all his productions, but in which he tries to graft a new and strange machinery on the Scripture narrative, which he would have found it difficult to have reconciled with it, or to have managed in itself. Byron has dropped on the rude and sullen "tiller of the ground" a metaphysical molting from his own dark wing. Yet his poem is a magnificent mistake, though, as really as that of Coleridge, it is a fragment. And Edmund Reade has tried to finish this terrible Torso, but the "foot of Hercules" seems to spurn him for his insolence in the attempt.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, enjoys a singular and short prominence in the early Scripture narrative. A few sentences sum up his history. All at once he is seen walking with God. In a little while, he is heard prophesying—"Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints;" and again a little while, he is seen and heard of no more. "He was not, for God took him." No chariot of fire for him. He was taken, or lifted, away by God's own hand. It is a rumor of the Rabbis, that he was on the point of being murdered by an assemblage of the flood-deserving and flood-doomed children of Cain, when he disappeared: he was not—he was melted down in God. It is remarkable, that, though the first of the prophets, he yet prophesied of the last event in the history of the world—the coming of the Lord. It is as if no event betwixt were majestic enough for him to touch—as if this coming of Christ from heaven best suited the tongue of him who, even on earth, was breathing the air of the upper paradise, and was, in a little while, to be caught up among the visions of God. Enoch's history rests, like a drop of glory, upon that ancient page.

Having come to "this side of the flood"—omitting Ham, that sun-burned giant of the old world, and Canaan, whose one mockery has been fearfully avenged—we see Nimrod, the mighty hunter, towering near the ruins of the Tower of Babel. A savage, primeval form he seems, looming large among the mists of the past, dressed in a reeking lion hide, measuring a wilderness of destructive creatures in his glance, and drawing a bow, from which you might fancy that shaft newly discharged which, as bold Chapman assures us, was

> "Shot at the sun by angry Hercules,
> And into shivers by the thunder broken."

Indeed the Hercules of mythology is a composite of the Nimrod, and the Samson of Scripture, with Nimrod's club in his hand, and Samson's strength and blind raging fury in his blood.

We come next to Abraham, the "friend of God," the father of the faithful, the ideal of an ancient patriarch, a nation in himself. His motions so total and sublime, like those of a cloud which "moveth altogether, if it move at all;" his constant connection in all his wanderings with heaven; the knock of God coming to his peaceful tent, and the emphatic whisper which told him to go westward; his fearless obedience, although not knowing whither he went; the sensation his advent and the altars which he raised made among the degraded nations of Canaan; his progress, traced by the silent smoke of worship; his sudden upstarting into a warrior, at the news of Lot's captivity, and the brave deed of deliverance which he wrought for him; the solemn moment when he was taken out by God below the starry canopy, and told that these innumerable orbs were an emblem of his seed for multitude; the moment, more awful still, when, amid the fragments of his sacrificial victims, a deep sleep came upon him, and a horror of great darkness came with it; his covenant, renewed again and again with Jehovah; the coming of three angels to his tent, to announce the birth of Isaac; his passionate pleading with God in be-

half of Sodom, then near to destruction—a pleading which more than once touches the brink of the presumptuous, and yet evites it by an hair's-breadth; his sending forth of Hagar and her son Ishmael into the wilderness—a tale touching the inmost fountains of the heart; and, above all, his princely journey to the Mount Moriah, with his son Isaac, "led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb"—a scene where filicide itself seems just mounting into a sacrament, and the knife-point of a son's sacrifice is reddening with glory, when God mercifully interferes to accept the will for the deed, and the ram for the child, are a few of the incidents of his remarkable story.

The great charm of Abraham's character, is its union of simplicity with grandeur. He rises like one of those great stones which are found standing alone in the wilderness, so quiet in their age, so unique in their structure, and yet on which, if tradition be believed, angels have rested, where sacrifices have been offered up, and round which, in other days, throngs of worshipers have assembled. His prayers pierce the heavens with the reverent daring of one of the mountain altars of nature. He is at once a shepherd and a soldier. He is true to the living, and jealous of the honor of the ashes of the dead. He is a plain man, dwelling in tents, and yet a prince with men and God. Peace to his large and noble dust, as it reclines near that of his beloved Sarah, in the still cave of Machpelah. He was one of the simple, harmless, elephantine products of an age when it was not a "humble thing to be a man," and when all the "giants in those days" were not robbers and oppressors.

Across the history of Abraham there shoot two curious episodical passages, both wrapt in the grandeur, and one in the gloom, of mystery. One is the story of Melchisedec. "Without father, without mother, without beginning of days or end of life," this man comes suddenly forth from Salem, meets Abraham on his way from the slaughter of the kings, presents bread and wine, blesses him, receives tithes of all the spoils, and disappears, whither, no one can tell. In our perplexity, we can

scarce deem him a being of this earth. Was he an Antediluvian? Had he witnessed the deep waters? Was he Shem? Was his head covered with hair, which had been gray before the deluge? Had that eye of his seen Adam and Eve? Had his young hand toyed with their coats of skins? Or was he a transient incarnation of the Divinity—was this the Son stepping down upon the stage of his after-labors before the time? We can not tell. The mystery is as yet impenetrable. *Stat nominis umbra.* We know only that he was so great, that Abraham gave him a tenth part of the spoils—that he is called a king, a priest, and one of the most striking emblems of the Son of God. He is the only specimen of a dynasty of monarch-priests, who remind us, in magnitude and in mystery, of the mighty creatures which tenanted the still cooling chaos of the primeval planet.

A darker shade rests upon the cities of the plain. Imagination shivers as she ventures to pass, with the "two angels," to the house of Lot, through the streets of the doomed cities on the last evening of their existence, and watches the bubbling fullness of a cup, in which licentiousness, murder, blasphemy, and unnatural lusts, were the ingredients, and listens to the cry of the city's sin coming to its sharpest and shrillest pitch before the abused door of the patriarch. We feel the horrors of the night infinitely worse than the terrors of the day, and are almost relieved, when after the brief mockery of brightness, "when the sun rose upon Sodom," the sky darkens, as, since the deluge, it never darkened before; and there begin to be wafted down from above flakes of flame and masses of bitumen, and the guilty cities are lost to sight in the embrace of a storm of fire-snow, and over their smoking ruins rise the waters of the Dead Sea, and then the lustration is complete; and from one of the fairest pages in nature's book the foulest blot of man's defilement is in one morning, by the tongue of fire "from the Lord out of heaven," licked forever away. How succinctly do God and nature always deal with ripened transgression of their laws! How needful such blood-lettings, when the blood

has become desperately foul! And how sure of recurring in every other age have those judgments hitherto been, as if to preserve the equilibrium of morals, and to prevent the permanent degradation of man, who is ever and anon aiming at a worse incarnation than his own, and, but for such fearful checks, would be "more vile" than the very beasts of the field.

Abraham, in leaving Isaac behind him, left rather a shadow than a son. He has less body and bulk, less grandeur, less boldness, but shadow-like he kneels, and looks up to God in imitation of his original. He has all Abraham's piety, and more than his peace. His cast of mind is given in one sentence—"And Isaac *digged again* the wells which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father." And when these wells became the subject of contest, he meekly retires in search of others. He is one among other proofs, that the children of very great men are sometimes inferior to their parents. The rationale of this may either be that the mothers are inferior to their mates, or that the education of the children of men much engrossed in public affairs, is often neglected; or that there is, what we may call, either an exhaustion or an economy in nature, which makes the sight of two men of eminence in the same family, or of two men of eminence in the relation of father or son to each other, more rare than the reverse. Glorious exceptions will occur, such as David and Solomon, Chatham and Pitt, to the memory of our readers; but still there have been a Solomon and a Rehoboam, a Hezekiah and a Manasseh, an Oliver and a Richard Cromwell, a Milton and a Mrs. Clarke, his daughter, and a thousand more, proving that lofty hills are apt to subside into lowly hollows.

Nevertheless, to Isaac there pertained certain amiable and uncommon properties. He is, perhaps, the most blameless of all characters in Scripture but *one*. Save a single falsehood, absolutely nothing is recorded against him. He was the faithful husband of *one* wife. He seems, too, to have possessed a certain gentleness, sweetness, and simplicity of disposition. His figure, "going forth into the fields to meditate at the evening

tide," is painted forever on the eye of the world. An action common now becomes glorified in the light of the past. It is the same with David's going to his chamber to weep, and with Christ's walking out "'mid ripe corn on the Sabbath-day." And it seems no wonder, that the same person who had meditated in his early days should, in his old age, "tremble very exceedingly" at the discovery of the fraud practiced on him by his son Jacob. It is the genuine history of his peculiar temperament.

Jacob, again, is a thorough Jew. In him, subtilty, love of this world's goods, and timidity, co-exist with profound attachment to the God of his fathers, and ardent devotion. His patience, too, in so waiting and working for his bride, reminds you of that of his people, who have, for ages, been looking up to a heaven, which, whether it be black or bright, never opens, nor ever shall, to let forth *their* beloved Messiah.

The poetical incidents in Jacob's history are exquisitely peculiar and interesting. Indeed, his whole life is as entertaining and varied as a romance. There is his journey to Padan-aram, and the dream, which, says Hazlitt, "cast a light upon the lonely place, which shall never pass away." No picture has hitherto done this complete justice. Even Rubens has but dimly expressed the ideal of the smiling face of the young patriarch, itself a dream of beauty—the vast silent desert, stretching like eternity around—the stone pillar, shining like a lump of gold in the radiance—and the undefined blaze of splendor (like a ladder, mountain, or stair; the original word is uncertain), rising up in brightening gradations, till lost in one abyss of crudded glory, and with angelic shapes swimming up and down, like motes of light, in the liquid luster. And who shall paint the bewildered and amazed aspect of the awakened patriarch, when, looking around and above, he finds the warm light of the vision gone, the dread yet tender voice past, and nothing around him but the dark desert, nothing beside him but the stone pillow, and the cold light of the stars of morning

above, and when he says, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not?"

The scenes which follow around the well-side, where he met the daughters of Laban, are in the sweetest pastoral vein. His meeting with Esau has made many a heart overflow in tears. But a deeper and stranger interest surrounds him, as he wrestles at Peniel, until the dawning of the day, with that mysterious figure of a "man" who seems to drop at once from heaven, shapes into dubious form during the shadows of the night, and melts away in the morning sunshine. The passage is one of those strange pits of darkness which occur amid the narrative plains of the Pentateuch, taking you down in an instant, like Joseph, out of the clear shining of the sun, into a place of impenetrable mystery. Yet it is full of deep significance. It is one of many proofs that the Word, ere identifying himself with flesh, *tried on*, once and again, if we may so speak, the robe of human nature, which he was everlastingly to wear. "Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen *God face* to *face*, and my life is preserved."

We must plead guilty, too, to an attachment to poor Esau. We like him as he "comes out red" even "all over like an hairy garment." We love to watch him in his impetuous way over the mountains and the valleys, another Nimrod, a mighty hunter, but not "before the Lord." We sigh as we see him devouring, with a hunter's hunger, the red pottage, into which he has recklessly shred his birthright. We pity him still more, as he "cries with an exceeding great and bitter cry, Bless me, even me also, O my father!" We feel, as we witness the scene of reconciliation with Jacob, how plaintive is the grief of a rugged nature when weep it must, and that rivers are the tears of rocks; and, as we see him, for the last time, "returning on his way" to his own shaggy Seir, to become the founder of a rough race, inhabiting a country of fire and sand, we are not afraid to re-echo Isaac's blessing upon his head. He was not a child of grace, or of the promise, but he was a sincere and stalwart son

of nature, with a "strong heart, fit to be the first strong heart of a people."

Who forgets the affecting circumstances of Rachel's death in child-birth, when nature in her called the child Benoni, the "son of my sorrow," and grace in Jacob called him Benjamin, the "son of my right hand?" The history of Joseph, again, is a succession of scenes, constituting the finest prose drama in the world. If ever drama possessed all the constituents of that species of composition, unity of plot, a "beginning, middle, and end," vicissitude of interest, variety of character, pathos of feeling, elegance of costume, and simplicity of language, it is this. Its commencement is so simple, its denouement so ingenious, its close so satisfactory and triumphant! And yet we never lose the feeling for a moment—"This is truth, although truth stranger far than fiction." And just as a drama looks more beautiful when spotted with lyrics, we have here one spot, at least, of transcendent beauty—Jacob's blessing, namely, when a-dying, over his children. It is intensely figurative. He ranges his children, like zodiacal signs, around his bed, not by name only, but by emblem. Reuben is a foul and trembling wave; Simeon and Levi are "instruments of cruelty;" Judah is a lion; Zebulun's sign is a ship; Issachar is a strong, couching ass; Dan is a serpent by the way; Gad is a troop; Asher, a loaf of rich bread; Naphtali is a hind let loose; Joseph is a fruitful bough; and Benjamin is a ravening wolf.

Passing farther down into the history, and omitting many points and characters touched on before, we mark with interest the spies on their way to the land of promise. They appear one company as they go; as they return, they bear between them the same grapes of Eschol, and yet how different the reports they bring! Even the land flowing with milk and honey, has two sides to two different sets of eyes and hearts. To see the Millennial land, to see heaven aright, there must, in like manner, be purged hearts, prepared spirits, eyes cleansed with "euphrasy and rue." Let two men, of different faiths and tempers, enter into one peaceful and Christian house, they will

bring back accounts conflicting to contradiction: one has seen nothing but dull commonplace, or harsh austerity; the othe. has descried the quiet luster of the peace that passeth understanding, and the half-formed halo of the joy that is unspeakable, and full of glory. Coleridge says of nature—

> "O, lady, we receive but what we give;
> Ours is her luminous vesture, ours her shroud."

This is but a part of the truth. We must meet nature, man, God himself, and his glory, half-way. He gives a sun or a Shekinah to be admired; but, on our part, there must be a soul to admire the same. Nay, in a profounder sense still, God gives *all*—the beauty, and the sense of it—the landscape, and the eye—the moral loveliness, and the moral vision—the heaven, and the heart—and is at once the adored and the adorer: "for *of* him, and *through* him, and *to* him, are all things—to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Among the spies, there stood up two men of clear insight and firm faith, Caleb and Joshua. They were in the minority, but they were right. Overborne by numbers at first, their word became stronger every hour, till it had been madness to deny it. Thus it is always with the deeper and stronger insight of true men. It increases, because it is real, as well as strong; whereas, the eyesight of the multitude, defective at first, soon weakens and fades away.

Two other incidents in the history of Israel, ere the Jordan was passed, must be noticed: the rebellion of Korah, and the rise of Phinehas. There are forced and shallow eruptions in the moral and political world, which have little connection with its general current. They resemble breakings out on the skin, rather than attacks on the seat of life; they are transient revolts, and not revolutions, nor hardly rebellions. The wise man is ever ready to distinguish their true character, and to take his measures accordingly. While he must bow before an inevitable and profound convulsion of the internal elements, the

outbreaks of petty disaffection he will at once burn away. The revolt of Korah and his company had an imposing aspect, but was, in reality, skin-deep. By one energetic effort, therefore, by one appeal to the prayer-hearing guardian of the camp of Israel, Moses removes it. The whole disaffection is gathered into one point—into one inch, as it were, of envious fury against Moses and Aaron; and below that inch, destruction yawns but once, and for a moment, and it sinks down and disappears forever. With censer in hand, with their strange fire burning in it, those would-be priests are swallowed up and hid, killed and buried, and a clean, and smooth, and sandy surface, conceals the particulars of their horrible doom.

A deeper disaffection soon after seizes the camp. It is not this time so much against Moses, as it is against God; it is not the disaffection of a clan of nobles, but of many of the congregation. "*Israel* joins himself unto Baal-peor." Moses himself is appalled. The plague is in the camp. He has received a command, and has circulated it, to "hang up the heads of the offenders." But he is yet hesitating about its execution, when, lo! the sin comes to its open climax in his very sight, and in that of the congregation, who were weeping for it before the tabernacle; an "Israelite brings unto his brethren a Midianitish woman," and then the "wild justice" of nature can slumber no more. Phinehas, an obscure priest, arises, pierces them both through with his dart, and the plague straightway is stayed. So, when rampant and inveterate evils reach their point, the schemes of the wise are not required. God selects the nearest instruments, and the "things that are not," the very nonentities of this world, bring to naught the things which are, but should not continue to be.

The Book of Judges is the most miscellaneous history in Scripture. It records the events of a period when every man did as it was right in his own eyes. In this anarchy, as in all subsequent anarchies, there arose many peculiar characters, who rather defended God's cause by their prowess, than adorned it by their piety. Still the short dagger of Ehud gleams upon

us, and his words—"I have a message from God unto thee"—ring in our ears, as did they once in Eglon's, the King of Moab. The ox-goad of Shamgar, too, is still preserved in the museum of our memory. Was it not one of the curiosities shown to Christian in the house which is called Beautiful? Gideon's famous emblems were there also—the "fleece," the cake falling on the tent, besides the pitchers, the lamps, and the trumpets of his wondrous warfare. Then there succeed three heroes, each with a bend sinister either in his birth or his character. Abimelech, Jephtha, and Samson, remind us of Montrose, Claverhouse, and Rob Roy, in their close succession, equivocal reputation, and daring power and courage, and present us with the pictures of the first cleft through the skull by a stone from a woman's hand, the second presiding at his daughter's sacrifice, and the third blinded, and bound in Delilah's lap.

Samson, a personage with whom the blind giant of English poetry thought proper to measure his old but unfaded strength, is less remarkable, for beautiful or holy interest, than for striking points: such as his elephantine mildness, ere he was roused—the strong impulses which came upon him, and seemed necessary to develop his full powers—his unconsciousness, even in his mightiest feats, of doing, or afterward having done, any thing extraordinary—his lion-like love of solitude—his magnanimity—his childlike simplicity—his tame subjection to female influence, and the sacred trust in which he held his unequaled energies. In the complete assortment and artful presentment of Samson's qualities as those of a patriot-hero, there is more of the mythic semblance than in the history of any other of the Scripture worthies; but the distinct and definite account given of his parentage, and the particulars of his death, as well as Paul's allusion to him in the Hebrews, as an historical character, forbid us to doubt his reality. His religion, which has been questioned, is proved by the success, if not by the spirit, of his last prayer.

The name of Ruth suggests the other female characters in Scripture. A modest rosary might be strung from their names.

Simplicity, innocence, gentleness, piety, and devotedness to their husbands, fathers, or God, are qualities distinguishing the majority. There is little *individuality* of excellence. Naomi is an old Ruth, Ruth a young Naomi—Hannah a middle-aged Naomi or Ruth—Mary, Lydia, Anna, and twenty others, are similar in all but age and circumstances. Deborah, indeed, towers over the rest, holding her harp and staff-scepter upon the top of Tabor. Miriam, with timbrel in her hand, seems to emulate Deborah's prospective grandeur, till the leprosy of envy smites her forehead, and she is "shut out seven days." Next to them, the little maiden in the family of Naaman has her own niche, and close to her appear the "widow with the two mites;" Mary Magdalene; the nameless woman, "who loved much, and to whom much was forgiven;" and she, also nameless, of Samaria; besides Phebe, Priscilla, and the elect lady. Nor must Esther, the magnificent and maidenly upstart, nor the wise and wealthy Queen of Sheba, be forgotten. Ignoble or cruel females are also to be found, such as Jezebel, and she who, in the quaint language of old Fuller, "danced off the head of John the Baptist," and Sapphira, and Bernice.

The mention of the beautiful suggests to us the name of Absalom, the most beautiful and foolish of the sons of men. He is a striking illustration of the austere and awful compensations of the universe. We find a strict parsimony always exercised in doling out the precious gifts of the Creator. The thorn and the rose growing on one stem; poison and beauty dividing the serpent between them; fidelity, sagacity, and madness, equally characterizing the canine species; sense, mildness, power, and clumsiness, united in the elephant; the peacock, with his splendid plumage and hideous scream; the nightingale, with her sober livery and matchless song; the tropical clime, with its magnificent vegetation, its diseases, and its lothsome reptiles; —these apparent anomalies are probably fragments of one wide law, portions of one wise, benevolent, but mysterious arrangement. "Nothing is given, all things are sold." Thus, Absalom, with intellect, popular graces, and the face and form of an angel,

began as a spoiled child, and ended in a composite of fool and villain. Like the horns of the stag in the fable, his long hair, which had been his glory, became his ruin. What a pitiful and shocking figure he presents, dangling from the oak, and with Joab's dart quivering in his heart! He lived and died "childless," but has had a large spiritual seed. Men speak with disgust of the griffins and other motley forms of heraldry; and with a kind of shudder of that stranger heraldry of nature, the quaint composites of geology; but such combinations as Absalom, of "Beauty and the Beast"—such moral paradoxes—are ineffably more appalling and more unaccountable.

Joab, whom we have just mentioned, shines in a savage and lurid light. Faithful, as his shadow, to David, he is to all other "fierce as ten furies," and "false as hell." He is one of the homicides of history. His soul is incarnate in his sword. To "dare, and to dare, and to dare," is his whole creed and morality. Yet his decision, his thorough-going courage, his fidelity, and his rough, strong sense, give him great influence over David, who fears, hates, but can not part with, and dare not quarrel with him. Thus, men of genius often yield to the power of men, who possess mere rude intellect and a determined will. Men of genius fluctuate, like the wide, uncertain ocean; men of will pass on, and pierce it with an iron prow.

The next character of much interest, except Elijah, already characterized, is Elisha. He is a soft and moonlight reflection of his master. Elijah floats up in fire to heaven; Elisha makes iron swim on the waters. Elijah commands rain from heaven to stay the progress of famine; Elisha obtains the same purpose, by frightening away the Syrians from their camp. Elijah brings down fire from the clouds to kill; Elisha sprinkles meal into the pot to cure. Elijah passes into heaven—the "nearest way to the celestial gate"—far above the valley and the shadow of death; Elisha dies in his bed, although even there he is great, infusing might and the prophecy of victory into the hands of Joash, as he shoots his emblematic arrows against the

Syrian foe; and did not his very bones in the grave revive the dead?

But, perhaps, nowhere does this prophet assume a more dignified aspect than in reference to Naaman and Gehazi. Never was a more singular group assembled than that which, on Naaman's return from Jordan, met at Elisha's humble door. Here stands the prophet, in serene self-control, in majestic simplicity, declining the offered reward. There, Naaman, the generous and noble, slowly, reluctantly returns the money into the bag. Behind him, his servants stare out their wide-mouthed astonishment at the scene; and, in a corner, you see the mean Gehazi, his eye glistening and his face falling, as he loses sight, he fears forever, of his darling coin. Equally striking is Elisha's interview with him, on his return from his fraudful following of the Syrian. Gehazi shrinks under his eye, as he says—"Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?" Forth, thou base one, from my presence! But, ere going, take MY gift, as thou hast taken Naaman's. He gave thee two talents of silver, which will support thee for only a few years; my present will last thee for life, and be handed down as an heirloom to thy seed. Thou hast taken the money; take now the *stamp* with it. Let the Syrian's leprosy follow his lucre. "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed forever." And speechless, confounded, feeling the white heat of the fell disease beginning to burn upon his brow, he less goes than vanishes from the prophet's presence, "a leper as white as snow."

Certain characters of energetic and various evil now pass over our page. Hazael holds up in his hand the wet cloth with which he has choked his master, and seems to say—"That is my flag and terrible title to fame." Rabshakeh seems to rail on from the wall for evermore. Jehu, who is just Joab mounted in a chariot, driveth furiously to do his brief work of destruction, and then to commence an inglorious and godless reign. And Haman, after conspiring against the life of a nation, has his "face covered" in awful silence, and hangs

on his own gallows—a substitute, without merit and without honor, for a whole people. Ravens these, preserved in Noah's ark, but not the less birds of foul feeding and of bad omen.

In fine contrast with them, appear Mordecai, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Mordecai—that silent Jew—sits at the king's gate, an eternal emblem of the *amari aliquid*—the sad something, which not only mars the joy of wicked men, but infects the lot of all. That silent, somber Jew, do not seek to approach or to disturb! Leave him alone; for, though he seems a serpent, if you touch him, he may start up the *enemy:*

> "That fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
> Near thee, like thy shadow, hangs.
> Dream not to chase; the mad endeavor.
> Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
> Be as thou art, thy settled fate,
> Dark as it is, all change would aggravate."

Ezra again figures as the wise counselor and diligent scribe, and Nehemiah, the generous, bold, cautious, and devout "king's cupbearer," has left us one of the first and most delightful of autobiographies. Honor to him, who still seems to stand at the unfinished wall, while over his head the "stars" are coming out, with a trowel in one hand, and a sword in the other! It is the attitude of man, to whom the command has come with burning urgency—"Work God's work, and resist the enemies of thy soul, even unto blood, striving against sin." How striking, too, is the heroism of his language, when tempted to hold a conference with his subtile foes. "I am doing a great work, so that I can not come down;" or when urged to flee into the temple to save his life, he said, "Shall such a man as I flee?" There spoke a genuine ancient Puritan—a Jewish Hampden or Cromwell.

We pass now to the New Testament, and find John the Baptist standing upon its very threshold. We remember the singular circumstances of this man's birth, and the strange pro-

phecy that lay aforetime on him. He was to be the prophet of the Highest, and to go before the Lord to prepare his ways. But previously he had to undergo a severe and secret training: "He waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." He was to come forth in the attitude of a mighty and dauntless reformer. He was to stem the torrent of a godless age, and to stem it at first alone. It was fit, then, that he should obtain a hardihood of temper, an indifference to reproach, and a defiance of danger—that he should be able to confront a tyrant, and rebuke a Pharisee, and counsel a soldier, and "know how to die." And where did he receive this strength of spirit? Where was he nursed and hardened into a hero and a reformer? In an appropriate school—in the deserts. There he received his prophetical education. He attended no school of the prophets, he sat at the feet of no Gamaliel; but among the rocks, and the caves, and the solitudes of the wilderness, he extracted the sublime and stern spirit of his office. The tameless torrent, dashing by, taught him his eloquence. The visions of God furnished him with his theology. Perhaps, like Elias, his great prototype, he took a journey to Horeb, the Mount of God; stood upon the black brow of Sinai; and imbibed the remanent influence which still floated round that hill of fear. Furnished he must be, in no ordinary measure, for the duties of this extraordinary office. He was the immediate forerunner of the Messiah. His Master's feet were just behind him. He seemed afraid of being overtaken. He had but the one brief, bright hour of the morning star. The Sun of Righteousness was soon to darken his beams, and melt him down in the light of the new economy.

Hence, his sermons are very short. They were the broken and breathless cries of a messenger, who is barely in time to announce the coming of his Lord. "Repent ye! Be baptized! Behold the Lamb of God! The kingdom of heaven is at hand!" He was a voice—a stern and melancholy voice—"the voice of one crying in the wilderness." His aspect was in keeping with his mission. It was somewhat wild and salvage. He was clad

in camel's hair, and had a leathern girdle about his loins. His food was locusts and wild honey. Such was the apparition who, standing with one foot in the desert, and the other on the polluted soil of Palestine, uttered his stern and continuous cries. Men saw in him a resuscitation of the ancient prophet. He had, indeed, no rhythmic utterance, and no figurative flights; but he had the dress, the spirit, the power, the wild-eyed fervor, and the boldness of his prototypes; and hence the wilderness of Jordan rang to his voice, Judea was struck to the heart at his appearance, and Jerusalem went out, as one man, to his baptism.

Besides the rough and furrowed garment of peculiar character possessed by John, we are struck with many subordinate traits, with his keen-eyed recognition of Jesus, the wisdom and prudence he displays in his advices to various classes of his auditors, with his perfect integrity and disinterestedness, and with the unaffected good grace with which he consents to be merged in his successor and superior. Many men yield to such a necessity with the reluctance of those rivers which wax intolerably noisy at the moment they are joining the larger streams. John easily, softly, yet eagerly, sinks on the bosom of the mightier one, and it becomes a wedding, not an extinction.

One bold word cost him dear. Declined as he was, in the reaction of his great popularity, Herod ventures to cast him into prison, and there allows a rash oath to a dancing minion to entangle him in the ghastly crime of the murder of a man he esteemed. That head, which had shone on the edge of the desert like a rising star of eve, and been mistaken by many for the head of the Christ, appears now all clotted with gore, and gray with previous anguish, upon a charger. It is ever thus that the world has used its protesting and inspired souls. And though the hemlock no more stops the mouth of a Socrates, nor the saw crashes through the body of an Isaiah, and our chargers be empty of such heads as the Baptist's, yet Wisdom's children are still subject to peculiar pains and penalties—mis

understood, if not murdered—neglected, if not gagged—and, if not torn limb from limb, have, how often, their feelings lacerated, their motives and their characters recklessly reviled! The Baptist possesses one honor altogether peculiar to himself. His epitaph was spoken by Christ: "Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Who would not wish to have died John's death twice over, to have attained such a tribute from such lips?

Among Christ's disciples, besides the two formerly characterized, stand out boldly distinct other two—Thomas and Judas. Thomas is the incarnation of doubt. He may represent that class who demand demonstrative or sensible evidence for their faith. This is not, perhaps, the highest species of believers, but it is a class which, like Thomas, shall yet receive satisfaction. Now, there are many Thomases, and they may probably be satisfied sooner than they think, and sooner than many of them need desire. "For who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap."

Judas Iscariot—what a host of dark thoughts and images start up at the mention of that detested name! His name seems hung up on a gallows in the sight of all men, that human nature might, in the course of ages, pay its full arrears of hatred, contempt, and disgust, to the guilt it represents. Children lothe him, and stammer out curses from their little hearts. Divines in every age have lanched invectives, burning in truth and eloquence, against him. Dante heats for him a circle in hell seven times hotter, and classes him next in crime to Lucifer himself. Jesus utters but one word; but it is a fearful one—"One of you is a devil." To other criminals, repentance, however late, conciliates forgiveness, and suicide procures an awful pity. But men and devils seem to unite in trampling on the scattered bowels and broken rope of this suicide. Even in the place of woe, many will fancy the poet's words realized for him, and him alone:—

> "The common damned shun his society,
> And look upon themselves as fiends less foul."

His history, indeed, seems a frightful anomaly, even in the annals of crime. He was a treasurer and a traitor, an apostle and a thief; while listening to Christ, he was measuring him for the cross; when he sold him, it was for the price of a dog; when he betrayed him, it was with a kiss of hypocrisy so vile, that it seems yet to ring through the earth, eternal in its infamy; when remorse awakened, he rushed in to the high-priests with bloodshot eye, and the money chinking in his trembling hands, and said—"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood;" and to give the whole a dark consistency, he hies to a field, and there, amid the gloom of night, hangs himself: the rope breaking, and his bowels gushing out; and we seem to hear the fiends, with a yell of unusual joy, seizing on their prey.

How account for a crime and a character so portentous and unnatural as this? In vain, to say with Whately and Horne, that Judas betrayed Christ for the purpose of forcing him to reveal himself as the King of the Jews. In this case, would Christ have spoken of him in language so strong? Besides, Christ had positively declared that he was to die. And Judas had been too long in Christ's company not to know that all his words were sure of fulfillment.

Our notion of Judas is, that he "had a devil, and was mad"—that he was a demoniac—that probably, for crimes committed by him formerly, he was handed over to the enemy, and had Satan instead of soul. He became the mere vessel of an infernal will. With this agree many circumstances in his story, and the language used concerning him by Christ. His rush to suicide especially reminds you of that of the demon-filled swine. In stating this view, we do not mean to palliate his crime, or to whitewash his character. He had undoubtedly "tempted the devil," and been consigned over to him for his sins. But the theory commends itself to us as the more probable, and as taking the character out of the category of monsters of

wickedness—a class so rare in the world. We would, in short, divide Judas into three parts, and assign one to guilt, a second to madness, and a third to hell.

And although we have, to complete the picture of the common view of his character, spoken of the demons snatching his soul, we are far enough from being inclined to dogmatize upon his future fate. All that Peter ventures to say of it is, that he went to his "own place;" and God forbid that we should dare to say any more.

The Book of Acts presents us with a great many characters, of whom, besides the apostles, the rapt Stephen, the Ethiopian Eunuch, the brave Cornelius, the most marked are unhappily evil. Barnabas, Ananias, Philip, Aquila, Mark, Silas, Timotheus, and Luke himself, have not much that is individual and distinctive. The sameness of excellence attaches to them all. It is very different with the others. Their shades are all dark, but all strikingly discriminated.

There is, for example, Simon Magus, the begetter and name-giver to a distinct and dreadful crime (Simony), an original in wickedness, a genuine and direct "child of hell." No mistake about him. He thinks every thing, as well as every person, "has its price," and would bribe the very Spirit of God. You see him retiring from Peter's scorn and curse, blasted, cowering, half-ashamed, but unconverted.

Then there is Herod, appearing on a set day, in (as early historians tell us) a dress spangled with silver, which, as it caught the sun, shone and glittered, and giving an oration to the people, who shout, "It is a voice of a God, not of a man;" till, as he is just beginning to believe the insane incense, a deputation from the grave—a company of worms—claim a closer audience, and he is at once flattered and festered to death.

Then there is Ananias the liar, smitten down amid his sin, and seen writhing in the lightnings of Peter's eye.

Then there is Elymas the Sorcerer, reduced in a moment to the level of his own gods, who have "eyes, but see not," and

made for the first time in his life earnest, as he gropes in vain to find the day.

Then there is Gallio, another great original in the world of evil, the first representative of a large class who, in all ages succeeding, have thrown the chill of their careless and cutting sneer upon all that is earnest and lofty in nature or man, in life or in religion.

Then there is the town-clerk of Ephesus, one of those persons who substitute prudence for piety, and who find a sun in the face of a time-piece—who tell men when they are not to act, but never when the hour of action has fully come, and when delays are as contemptible as they are dangerous.

Then there is Tertullus the tool, servile, wiry, accommodating, plausible; who talks, but never speaks; and whose character may be studied as representing, in a full and ideal manner, all courtly pleaders who have since appeared, as well as many who have pleaded in nobler causes.

Then there is Felix, whom one trembling has immortalized. Rude the lyre; but a great master stood once before it, and it vibrated to his touch. Even nettleshade has sometimes been made musical in the blast.

Then there is Agrippa, the "almost Christian"—one of thousands who, were Christianity and the thrill produced by eloquence the same thing, would be believers; but who, as it is, will lose heaven by a hair's-breadth, and feel little sorrow!

Then there is Festus, the emblem of the cool, intellectual man, who finds an easy solution for the problem of earnestness, or genius, or enthusiasm, or religion—a problem which, otherwise, would distress and disturb him in the cheap cry —"It is madness—Paul, Burke, Chalmers, and Irving, were mad."

Then, in the Epistles, we find a glimpse, and no more, of Nero, the mysterious tyrant of Rome, the delicate infernal, the demon in elegant undress, the musical murderer, so whimsically graceful in the management of his horrors, combining the soul of a Moloch with the subtilty and attractiveness of man-

ner possessed by a Belial. We can fancy Paul, whose subtilty was not the least of his powers, foiling the tyrant at his own weapons, and thus "escaping the mouth of the *lion*"—a word expressing rather the fear with which he was regarded than the character he possessed.

We close this rapid glance at the more peculiar and striking of Scripture characters, by expressing our amazement:—First, at their multitude; secondly, at their variety; thirdly, at the delicacy with which they are discriminated; fourthly, at the manner in which they are exhibited—so artless, brief, and masterly—not by analyses or descriptions, but by actions and words; fifthly, at the great moral and emblematical lessons which they teach; sixthly, at the fact that the majority of these characters have left duplicates to this hour; seventhly, at the honesty of the writers who record them; and, lastly, at this significant fact, there is one character who appears transcendent above them all, at once, in purity, power, and wisdom. The Scripture writers register the fall of Adam, the drunkenness of Noah, the incest of Lot, the falsifications of Abraham, the passionate wrath of Moses, the adultery and murder of David, Peter's lie, John's ambition, and Paul's over-subtilty; but to Jesus, they ascribe nothing but what is amiable, good, and godlike. They exhibit him more eloquent than Isaiah, and more wise than Solomon; and yet holy as an angel, and humble as the poor woman who brake the alabaster box of ointment at his feet. There are spots in the sun; but there are none in thy beams, O Sun of Righteousness!

This spotless Lamb *is*. He exists somewhere. He is, we believe, at God's right hand. He is preparing, as he has promised, to come down. We must appear at his bar. Our lives must be tested and our natures searched in the light of his countenance. Let us prepare for this meeting, which must be, and may be soon, by putting on the only character in which it shall be safe to confront his eye—that, namely, of little children. The Divine Child must be met by "little children;" and amid their hosannas (as he entered into the ancient temple), must he

enter again into the prepared and consecrated temple of earth and heaven. Let us listen to his voice, which he sends before him along his dread and glorious way, saying, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

THE END.

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